

THE NOVEL OF UNLEARNING: EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND INTERRACIAL
INTIMACIES IN COLD WAR AFRICA

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By

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ABSTRACT

Development, in terms of political and economic advancement, came to prominence post-World War II and in the Cold War era, establishing certain countries and cultures as “developed” and others as “underdeveloped” or “developing.” As a historically constructed discourse, development relies on a model of linear progress epitomized by Western modernity and creates a space in which only such a model can be accepted. Education for the underdeveloped subject is also a major component of this discourse, evident in international educational exchange programs during the Cold War. Such historical and social circumstances created unique conditions for subject formation that are underexplored in both development and literary studies.

Focusing on Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), Chanakya Sen’s *The Morning After* (1973), and Nuruddin Farah’s *Gifts* (1992), this thesis considers how knowledge formation, the postcolonial subject, and interracial intimacies in these global Cold War-era novels resist the dominant discourse of linear development from the perspective of the underdeveloped. By historicizing these texts in the context of the Cold War and analyzing their unconventional interplay of traditional African literary conventions in the form of the Western novel, I argue that the four texts demonstrate how the African student who studies in a more developed country is made subject to the mindset of development by their education. The novels also embody an uneasy relationship to modernity and the very idea of development, through depictions of interracial, inter-developmental intimacies that are tortured, alienating, and dehumanizing. The thesis envisions how we can think

about a “fiction of development” outside of the familiar form of the *Bildungsroman*, towards a form that addresses development by recognizing the various problems of a linear mindset on subject formation and national progress.

Key words: Development; education; postcolonial studies; African literature; Cold War; Third World literature; interracial intimacy

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INTRODUCTION

THE TALES OF THE THIRD WORLD

“Daktari wa meno,” chuckled Latif Mahmud, one of the two main characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah’s 2001 novel *By the Sea*, as he recalled his journey from being a young boy in Zanzibar to becoming a literature professor in London. This journey began with Latif’s arrival in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) or East Germany, where he was sent by his national government to train as a “daktari wa meno,” Swahili for “dentist.”¹ The idea of becoming a “teeth doctor” amused Latif and his young companions at the time, but is an important indicator for one of the key historical contexts of the novel: the period after the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, during which the conflicting Cold War powers became involved in economic and technological development in Zanzibar. While “the United States government refused to finance some development projects which [their] President thought essential to national progress,” the Communist bloc agreed to provide financial, military, and educational help.² Students like Latif were given scholarships to the GDR to gain technical degrees in fields related to engineering or medicine. But after Latif arrived in Germany determined to be a dentist, he soon found himself in England, claiming to be a refugee from the GDR to gain entry, once again invoking the Cold War context.³ In England he studied English Literature, became a poet and a professor at the University of London, and remained there, contrary to his initial purpose of learning a skill and returning home to help his country. This past desire, and indeed his own origin, seem to have gone forgotten within Latif, until he was asked to be the translator for Saleh Omar, the other main character of the novel and an old, abused asylum seeker in England. This event reveals

¹ Abdulrazak Gurnah, *By the Sea* (New York: The New Press, 2001), 107.

² Gurnah, 107.

³ Gurnah, 138.

Latif's past and his representation of a kind of African subject in the context of the discourse of development during the Cold War: from training to be a dentist to becoming a literature professor, he embodies the relationship between technical knowledge and literary representation, between Western models of development and education for Africans after decolonization.

The connections between development, education, and African subject formation are evident in modernity's influence on the subject in postcolonial African literature. Simon Gikandi argues that modernity, and the promise of modernization, "haunts" twentieth-century African literature even – and especially – when their central themes have to do with the premodern or tradition.⁴ It is "the condition of possibility in African fiction – barely mentioned, yet driving the relation between the subject, cultural nationalism, and social transformation."⁵ Gikandi posits the domineering presence of modernity in African literary discourse after 1960 in the narrative of the African's conversion from "a so-called tradition to a modern subject." This conversion often appears as a failed trope, but there remains in such literature "the overpowering presence of the temporality of the modern."⁶ Another way of understanding this preoccupation with modernity is to consider modernity as a "structure of feeling," following Raymond Williams's influential conception of this term. As the structure of feeling for postcolonial African texts, modernity underlies literature in implicit ways, as a "particular sense of life, a particular community of experience hardly needing expression, through which the characteristics of [their] way of life that an external analyst could describe are in some way passed, giving them a particular and characteristic colour."⁷ As African literature wrestles with the decolonizing moment by having

⁴ Simon Gikandi, "African Literature and Modernity," *Matatu* 35, no. 1 (2007), 3.

⁵ Gikandi, 5.

⁶ Gikandi, 8.

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Raymond Williams on Culture & Society*, ed. Jim McGuigan (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2014), 34.

its subject struggle between the modern and the traditional, undergoing a “conversion” or transformation not dissimilar to that of Latif Mahmud after his arrival in London, it assumes the logic of modernity, of which development is an inextricable manifestation.⁸ Development, with its promises of technological and economic advancement, undergirds movements of African students to Europe and other countries that were considered more developed for higher education.

This thesis aims to weave a web of relationships between development, education, and imperialism in the Cold War period, to make visible their connections and conflicts in four postcolonial texts’ critique of educational exchange and development practices in Africa: Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), Ama Ata Aidoo’s *Our Sister Killjoy* (1977), Chanakya Sen’s *The Morning After* (1973), and Nuruddin Farah’s *Gifts* (1992). While I will approach each text in its individual section, I also work with them comparatively throughout common theoretical and historical framings, as they share the feature of having local characters who receive an education in a more developed country, and then come into conflict and reckoning upon coming back to their underdeveloped origins. The texts also have in common the important historical context of the Cold War and the 1955 Bandung Conference, which figures significantly in the conception of these educated characters and their relationships to developmental modernity. If novels that address education are typically considered in terms of a *Bildungsroman* or its postcolonial variety, I seek to shed light on alternative ways of viewing

⁸ Specifically, Gikandi argues that African writers deal with the disenchantment of modernity arising from colonialism by making modernity wear the “mask of tradition,” in other words, even when African texts seem to take the position of upholding a premodern, traditional, precolonial condition, they assume the logic of modernity by mourning the loss of that premodern. Rather than merely rejecting the logics of modernity, Gikandi calls for an understanding of the subject in African literature as being entangled within both modernity and tradition to their own detriment.

postcolonial individual and national development, by reading these texts in the historical moment of the Cold War and the rise of the development discourse. Published within a 40-year span surrounding the milestones of the Cold War, the four novels also reflect different national histories in Africa in this time period. I recognize the cultural and historical particularities of each of these countries and their interactions with the so-called West, in an effort to push against the generalization of “Africa” as a static entity, as well as the claimed universality of the development process.

In his seminal text *Encountering Development*, Arturo Escobar calls development “the tale of three worlds.” These three worlds – “the free industrialized nations, the Communist industrialized nations, and the poor, nonindustrialized nations” – respectively came to be known as the First, Second, and Third World, terms that continue to represent them, especially the First World and Third World, even after the demise of the Communist bloc at the end of the Cold War.⁹ Historicizing the notions of development, underdevelopment, and the Third World in the post-World War II context, when such notions first became prominent principles for international relations, Escobar outlines how development is a historical product of the United States’ rise to the forefront of the international stage after 1945 and its need for new markets – first in capitalist Western Europe, then Latin America, and the many former colonies in Asia and Africa.¹⁰ From this early stage, with the creation of the United Nations (UN) in 1945, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (now part of the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1944, the focus of development projects was on monetary and material aid to the poorer nations in order to make them better grounds for capitalist

⁹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: the Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 31.

¹⁰ Escobar, 33.

expansion and liberal empire. The Cold War, the post-WWII struggle between the First and Second Worlds, further expanded the need for such projects of modernization and development from the perspective of industrialized nations, so that they could increase their spheres of influence.¹¹

As a historically constructed discourse, development relies on a model of linear progress epitomized by Western modernity and creates a space in which only such a model can be accepted. The organizing premise of development, from its creation in the 1940s, lies in modernization and economic growth. Modernization entails industrialization and innovation in science and technology, creating new, Western-defined spaces and conditions of knowledge. Poverty in the Third World became problematized, leading to a need for more capital, some given as aid from richer nations, some developed by “experts” from those richer nations who came to the Third World.¹² The linear path of development begins with the reform of the poor countries and ends with their development in wealth and industrialization in the path of Western Europe and the United States. Even today, the grouping of countries based on their places on the ladder of development relies on indices such as the Human Development Index by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) or the World Development Indicators by the World Bank, both of whose methodologies contain the numerical measure of gross national income per capita.¹³ With the arrival of development economics as an academic field, the central tenet of development, creating the nonindustrialized nations around the globe as underdeveloped,

¹¹ Escobar, 34.

¹² Escobar, 41.

¹³ See “Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update,” United Nations Development Programme, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2018_technical_notes.pdf and “Classifying Countries by Income,” The World Bank, <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/stories/the-classification-of-countries-by-income.html>.

inferior, and in need of aid, becomes perpetuated even further through academic research and development projects.

One aspect of this development project, amplified at the advent of the Cold War and underexplored *as* a development project, is educational exchange at the level of higher education, in which students from the developing world flowed to the developed – former colonial powers or Cold War allies – with funding support from Cold War powers, development agencies, or their own national governments. In a report on educational mobility commissioned by the UNESCO, N.V. Varghese marks World War II as the point from which higher education became “more aligned with the development needs of the country.”¹⁴ Both for the European countries reconstructing themselves after the war, and the recently decolonized developing countries, human resource development became a need, and the Cold War rivalries took the opportunity to allow foreign students into their universities, thereby spreading their language, ideology, and influence to the underdeveloped. According to Varghese, “the Cold War period helped fund higher education and promoted overseas study programmes [...] The Soviet Union was also in competition with the USA to attract more students to their higher education institutions.”¹⁵ It is worth noting that most of the countries formerly of the “developed” blocs, from both the US and the Soviet Union sides, except for Russia, now belong in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose members are considered high-income economies by the UNDP’s standards. As such, education and the flow of knowledge from the “developed” institution to the postcolonial subject plays an important role in how the development discourse grew its influence during the Cold War and up until today.

¹⁴ N.V. Varghese, *Globalization of Higher Education and Cross-Border Student Mobility* (Paris: UNESCO, 2008), 14.

¹⁵ Varghese, 14.

Critique of development as a discourse that excludes and reduces non-Western former colonies by producing them as “underdeveloped countries” while upholding a limited model of progress spans disciplines from anthropology, such as Escobar’s scholarship, to economics itself. One of my primary aims with this thesis is to put forward a critique of development from the perspective of literary studies, and to overcome some of the disciplinary bounds that have prevented meaningful engagement between development studies, a field that has direct effect on human lives around the globe, and literary studies, a humanistic endeavor. The article “The Fiction of Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge” by David Lewis et al. addresses, rather speculatively, the role of literature in portraying underexplored aspects of the project of global development. The authors outline their conceptual and theoretical bases, of development and forms of knowledge typically represented in development narratives, which tend to be quantitative, policy-oriented, and “center”-focused. Even when there are non-quantitative depictions of development from developing countries, such as the “Voices of the Poor” initiative by the World Bank, such testimonial accounts are non-fiction and thus still distinguished from the narrative forms of knowledge that literature offers.¹⁶ Lewis et al. argue that literature has much to offer development studies with its complex and diverse representations of development issues: “the promises and perils of encounters between different peoples; the tragic mix of courage, desperation, humour and deprivation characterising the life of the downtrodden; and the complex assortment of means, motives, and opportunities surrounding efforts by outsiders to ‘help’ them.”¹⁷ The purpose of their proposal, as well as of this

¹⁶ David Lewis, Dennis Rodgers, and Michael Woolcock, “The Fiction of Development: Literary Presentation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge,” *The Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2008), 200.

¹⁷ Lewis et al., 201.

thesis, is not to imply that the “official” economic or policy accounts are totally wrong, but that including literature in the consideration of development creates the necessary frictions that make for a more complete picture of the processes involved.

At the same time, thinking about development as a contemporary, continuing global discourse can also contribute meaningfully to the study of literature, as it necessitates more careful envisionings of the fields of “world” and “comparative literature.” I use “world literature” here following Pascale Casanova’s provocative and influential conceptualization of a world literary space in *The World Republic of Letters* (2007). Casanova’s approach to world literature, inspired by Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory, is itself an act of crossing disciplines. World-systems theory, originated in the social sciences in the 1970s, approaches social reality as not “the multiple national states of which we are citizens but something larger, which we call a world-system.”¹⁸ Proponents of this theory see institutions of history, economy, and politics as operating beyond the boundaries of nation-states to connect their influences across the world, while inflicting complications within the system. In tracking the history of world-system as a theory, Wallerstein also pinpoints 1945 as a turning point for the world-system, linking the occurrences of the United States’ rise to power, the Third World’s self-assertion, and the expansion of the university system around the world, creating new conditions of knowledge.¹⁹ Specifically in the academy, the forces of decolonization at this moment problematized the previous works of Orientalists and ethnographers trying to understand the non-Western “Other”; such issues created a need for new modes of study such as the U.S invention of “area studies.” Development, Wallerstein asserts, entered this conversation as an “ingenious

¹⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), x.

¹⁹ Wallerstein, 9.

intellectual solution” to reconcile the supposedly objective and highly specific study of a geographical or cultural area, and the need for universalizing principles in Western-created disciplinary formations such as economics, sociology, and political science.²⁰ The concept of “development” allowed for a generalizing knowledge to be applicable to every region across the globe, as such regions can all be subsumed under the categories of “developed” or “underdeveloped.”

The concept of “core-periphery” in world-systems theory, in particular, was a contribution by Third World scholars, to highlight the unequal exchange between the “core” – economically strong countries – and the “periphery” – the weaker ones. Casanova’s consideration of “world literature” applies world-systems theory’s structure of core-periphery to imagine a “*continuum*” between dominant – i.e. the most “richly endowed” literary spaces such as in Europe – and dominated literary spaces.²¹ Casanova concentrates on Europe, and specifically Paris, as the center of world literary space because of its literature’s autonomy from political and historical concerns and its long existence, while recognizing that “very different literary temporalities (and therefore aesthetics and theories) may be found in a given national space.”²² Casanova’s understanding recognizes non-linear temporalities within world literature, which transgress geographical and historical boundaries of the nation-state. Recognizing the Eurocentric tendencies of Casanova’s theory, the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), in trying to theorize world literature through a postcolonial lens as “literature of the world-system,” evoke the theory of “combined and uneven development” as an essential idea for imagining a

²⁰ Wallerstein, 10.

²¹ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M.B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 83. Emphasis in original.

²² Casanova, 201.

joined, yet uneven world.²³ As WReC explain from the works of Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky, the “development” in this theory, and its “combined” and “uneven” nature, is the result of the imposition of capitalist production upon un-capitalized sections of society, which have their own preexisting conditions that capitalism cannot account for.²⁴ According to WReC, Frederic Jameson takes this theory, also prevalent mostly in the social sciences, to be absolutely instrumental in the humanities as well, as a way to think about modernity as both a singular and a simultaneous global condition.²⁵ As such, “development” in WReC’s formation carries the valences of, but not necessarily the same meaning as, the economic-political “development” I’ve previously mentioned. However, to the extent that development is closely associated with modernization and conceived as a part of modernity, my critique of development – as historically contingent and ideologically oppressive – falls in line with WReC’s reconceptualization of modernity by “de-linking it from the idea of the ‘west’ and yoking to that of the capitalist world-system.”²⁶ Drawing development away from its defining features in the First World-Third World formation and placing it in literary works from the Third World is my strategy for thinking about works of world literature that engage with the transnational project of development. This thesis is not just about unthinking Eurocentrism, but thinking from the position of the “underdeveloped.”

In this project, I rely on postcolonial studies as the primary vantage point. As Cheryl McEwan points out, postcolonial theory is “deeply critical and suspicious” of development because of its upholding of the superiority of the global North, while development studies accuses postcolonial studies of being detached from the material reality of the poor, postcolonial

²³ The Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 10.

²⁴ WReC, 10.

²⁵ WReC, 12.

²⁶ WReC, 15.

countries.²⁷ Even Lewis et al.'s article itself reflects the disciplinary boundaries between the material, "real-world" focus of development and the discursive tilt of postcolonial studies, which originated in literary studies. As an article in the *Journal of Development Studies*, it remains general in its discussion of literary works that address development, not offering any close-reading of the texts but only plot summaries and reflections on how each novel relates to its own social and historical contexts. Nevertheless, because of the context of the emergence of what McEwan calls "Third Worldism" in the shadow of decolonization movements by former colonies, postcolonial studies, with its critique of both Eurocentric conceptions of knowledge and how this knowledge manifests in the colonial and postcolonial subject, can still critically engage with the conditions of knowledge produced by the development discourse. Knowledge formation, after all, is a central concern for such prominent postcolonial scholars as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty. In *Orientalism*, Said identifies Orientalism as both an academic and imaginative creation of knowledge, in which European culture produces and manages "the Orient" "by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it."²⁸ Bhabha points out how colonialist authority is established to the colonial subject through "the English book," a source of knowledge as well as power in its transparency and clarity, which in turn produces subjection through discriminatory practices. This knowledge works in two ways: "To be authoritative, its rules of recognition must reflect consensual knowledge or opinion; to be powerful, these rules of recognition must be breached in order to represent the exorbitant objects of discrimination that lie beyond its purview."²⁹ Chakrabarty's project in *Provincializing Europe* fundamentally concerns knowledge; it criticizes

²⁷ Cheryl McEwan, *Postcolonialism and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 27.

²⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Modern Classics (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 3.

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 111.

how historical knowledge in the Third World is produced with Europe as a “silent referent,” and shows both the necessity and impossibility of provincializing Europe, of decentralizing the knowledge that has defined all other conditions of knowing as a result of colonialism.³⁰

This mutual concern of postcolonial studies and development studies for knowledge and subject formation opens a window for me to investigate postcolonial literatures that address development through education. The relationship between education and empire is a complicated one, elucidated by works in education as well as literary studies. In the influential study *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, labor economist Martin Carnoy describes education, in terms of formal schooling, in the colonial period as what enabled colonialism by including the educated indigenous people into the imperial/colonial structure. These indigenous subjects, once included, helped uphold the colonial order as it was the order that they had been acclimated to.³¹ Even after decolonization, the new “independence” leaders of the former colonies were those who had received formal schooling in Western institutions, whom Carnoy describes as the “success story of colonial schooling” breaking ties with the systems that controlled them.³² In *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*, Gauri Viswanathan specifically links literary education in British India to colonial authority, arguing that the introduction of English literature in Indian schooling masked the violence of colonialism by creating a benevolent figure of the English, and enacted control on the colonial subject by conveying certain desirable characteristics. Viswanathan writes, “the history of education in British India

³⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 43.

³¹ Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: David McKay Company Inc., 1974), 8.

³² Carnoy, 17.

shows that certain humanistic functions traditionally associated with literature – for example, the shaping of character or the development of the aesthetic sense or the disciplines of ethical thinking – were considered essential to the processes of sociopolitical control by the guardians of the same tradition.”³³ Literary education, she explains, not only establishes models of character formation for the subject, but also insinuates the roles of the educator and the to-be-educated, who is “represented as morally and intellectually deficient.”³⁴ This is similar to the original pedagogical rhetoric of development, as stated by US President Harry Truman as the preamble for American aid to impoverished countries after World War II: “teaching these peoples how to help themselves.”³⁵ In other words, through technical assistance, development projects aim to educate and empower the underdeveloped to become a self-determining subject. Through this pedagogical tone, and subsequent educational exchange programs, development is perpetuated both as a knowledge and a condition of knowledge.

Season of Migration to the North, *Our Sister Killjoy*, *The Morning After*, and *Gifts* all address development from different angles, portraying the formation and deterioration of the African subject by education under the shadow of the discourse of development. From the integration of African oral forms into the novel prose in *Our Sister Killjoy* to the difficult public transportation infrastructure in the Somalian capital in *Gifts*, the valences of modernity and its conflict with tradition permeate these texts in thematic as well as formal elements. To establish the common, inescapable historical backdrops of these four texts, I first discuss the Cold War, the 1955 Bandung Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement in conjunction with postcolonial

³³ Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3.

³⁴ Viswanathan, 4.

³⁵ Harry Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope, 1946-1953, The Memoir of Harry S. Truman, Vol. 2*, (Suffolk, Great Britain: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1956), 246.

Third World literary studies. Rarely engaging with postcolonial studies, the Cold War nonetheless provides important insights into relationships between countries, relationships which become sexualized and racialized in the narratives by characters' interactions. Studying these texts, which share the postcolonial African preoccupation with modernity yet have rarely been read alongside and against one another, aligns my thesis with contemporary scholarship looking at Cold War narratives from Third World perspectives. I also address the shift in language addressing the developed-underdeveloped worlds, from the hierarchical First World-Third World order, to the more neutral and geographically relative addresses of the "Global North" – the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, some developed countries in Asia – and the "Global South" – Africa, Latin America, developing Asia, and the Middle East.³⁶ While *Season of Migration to the North*, *Our Sister Killjoy*, and *Gifts* portray some aspect of the North-South relationships typical in development studies, *The Morning After* concerns a more unusual South-South dynamic during the Bandung moment.

Following this historical and conceptual framing, my analytical focus is on how scenes of sexual intimacy in the texts reflect the problems of developmental modernity in this Cold War moment, how they highlight issues of race, gender, and economic inequality that undergird the official calls for development and solidarity. All four texts contain portrayals of sexual relationships that cross developmental registers. In *Season of Migration to the North*, *Our Sister Killjoy*, and *The Morning After*, such 'crossings' are highlighted by race: between the underdeveloped black African characters receiving education abroad and the more developed white Europeans or brown Indians they encounter, the intimacies reveal the impossibility of

³⁶ The Independent Commission on International Development Issues. *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues (under the Chairmanship of Willy Brandt) (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1980), 31.

linear development with Western modernity as the ultimate goal. Each respective text depicts a different kind of interracial relationship: from the black man-white woman relationship between Mustafa Sa'eed and Jean Morris in *Season*, which can be considered the most conventional with its references to canonical texts such as *Othello*, to Sissie and Marija's lesbian romance in *Killjoy*, and the black-brown, South-South encounters between Peter Kabaku and the unnamed Indian woman in *Morning After*. *Gifts*, then, offers a unique perspective as the intimate relationship portrayed between Bosaaso and Duniya is not interracial per se but nevertheless inter-developmental – the characters' roles, as I will show, are respectively those of the developed and the developing. These scenes allow me to analyze First World-Third World or North-South and South-South relations in the context of personal intimacies, which few analyses have done. This analytical angle is especially relevant to my critique of development because it establishes the link between the personal and the political through sex, the most personal of relations. If interracial intimacies during colonial times have been depicted as revealing colonial power dynamics, I argue that postcolonial texts employ similar functions for such relationships, to portray even more complicated power structures in the new forms of empire after World War II.

The conclusion considers the question of a “literature of development,” which is far from the well-established concept of the *Bildungsroman*. The texts I work with are novels about education, which consider aspects of development, yet for the stilted models of development they present, they are not “novels of education.” In form and plot, they problematize both the notions of character formation/growth through education and development as a global discourse. Thinking about a “fiction of development” in conjunction with modernity and (post)colonialism, my thesis agrees with and also diverges from Jed Esty's *Unseasonable Youth*. I take what he

calls “the spatial turn” into non-Western spaces to expand on his hypothesis on the developmental logic of the late *Bildungsroman*, in which “the relatively stable temporal frames of national destiny gave way to a more conspicuously global, and therefore more uncertain, frame of social reference.”³⁷ In other words, to Esty, “conspicuously” global engagements in the age of colonialism destabilized modernity to the point that growth in subject formation no longer aligned with national development. In the postcolonial contexts in this thesis, where the global cannot even feign conspicuousness, the form of writing about a developing subject has to be drastically different from the *Bildungsroman* or even its postcolonial renditions, to portray how the globalizing project of Development utterly suppresses both subject and national development. Stepping away from the narrative form of linear growth and change, I conceptualize a few ways in which a “fiction of development,” with development in the contemporary meaning of economic, political, and technological superiority, can actualize its destabilization of this very discourse.

³⁷ Jed Esty, *Unseasonable Youth: Modernism, Colonialism, and the Fiction of Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6.

‘COLD’ WAR?: CULTURAL CURRENTS AND INTERRACIAL INTIMACIES

The phrase “cold war” was first coined by George Orwell in 1945, in concern over the ways in which the proliferation of military nuclear technology could affect the dynamics between the United States and the USSR.³⁸ Conceived as a state of tentative ‘balance’ between two “super-states” based on the suspense of knowledge regarding the atomic bomb, the Cold War continues to be depicted and analyzed in scholarship as primarily concerning these two superpowers.³⁹ Attempts to broaden our understanding of the Cold War to the rest of the world have been facilitated by analyses of culture and development in the Third World. As historian Odd Arne Westad argues in *The Global Cold War*, “the most important aspects of the Cold War were neither military nor strategic, nor Europe-centered, but connected to political and social development in the Third World.”⁴⁰ Development was of instrumental importance for this time period because Third World leaders “framed their own political agendas in conscious response to the models of development presented by the two main contenders of the Cold War [...] led [the leaders] to subscribe to models of development that proved disastrous for their own peoples.”⁴¹ The interventions in the Third World after World War II, by both the United States and the Soviet Union, aimed to advance the universal ideology of either side, taking advantage of the growing rhetoric of a need for modernization in the wake of decolonization. However, to Westad, looking at the Cold War powers’ influences in the Third World is not merely portraying

³⁸ George Orwell, “You and the Atom Bomb,” in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Vol. IV: In Front of Your Nose*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1968), 9.

³⁹ I borrow “super-states” from Orwell’s use of this term in “You and the Atom Bomb,” as well as later in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

⁴⁰ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 396.

⁴¹ Westad, 3.

them as a new form of colonialism or imperialism. The difference is that Cold War interventions through development projects were not intended to exploit the Third World or to turn them into subjects; they were, rather, viewed as attempts to improve the poor countries and establish influence.⁴² While Westad's informative book is still an example of Cold War history's preoccupation with US-Soviet opposition, as it depicts how the underdeveloped former Western colonies were involved in this struggle, it nonetheless provides important insights for envisioning how the Third World experienced the Cold War. One of the most notable aspects of this experience is what Westad calls "wars against the peasantry" in favor of modernization, which constituted "cultural and social changes as drastic as the physical: in language, religion, and other values in Third World countries."⁴³

The Cold War facilitated not only military, technological, and economic production, but also cultural, of which literature was a major part. In the introduction to the edited volume *Global Cold War Literature*, Andrew Hammond cites David Caute's *The Dancer Defects* to highlight how the Soviet Union and the United States were trying to "out-educate, out-perform, out-write, out-produce, out-argue, outshine the other."⁴⁴ Scholarship on Cold War literature, some of which reflected in Hammond's volume, tends to focus on the Third World literary response to the violence and problems presented by the actions of the two superpowers, defining "Cold War literature" as "an international, multi-generic set of socio-political concerns and textual practices produced by, and productive of, the historical conditions of the time."⁴⁵ This subfield of Cold War is primarily concerned with how the Third World was 'writing back' to the

⁴² Westad, 5.

⁴³ Westad, 400.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *Global Cold War Literature*, ed. Andrew Hammond (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

⁴⁵ Hammond, 5.

political and economic influences of the two main superpowers, and their primary forms of literary expressions, such as the genres of socialist realism, espionage fiction, and science-fiction.⁴⁶ As such, the focus of analysis remains on the First World-Second World conflict, and not the Third World, where Westad argues the Cold War was primarily fought. Monica Popescu, advocating for a convergence between an understanding of the historical moment of the Cold War and the study of postcolonial literatures, suggests that “by integrating a cold war perspective with a reading that emphasizes postcolonial elements of texts we elucidate the roots of some aesthetic, thematic and ideological choices otherwise obscured or insufficiently illuminated by a discussion of literary forms of resistance to (neo)colonialism.”⁴⁷ Thinking about the emergence of African literature as a field in the period after World War II, Popescu focuses on the importance of looking at African literature, and postcolonial literature of the Third World at large, not only as a reaction to the US-Soviet conflict in all of its material and ideological manifestations, portraying the global South as “battlefields and hotspots of a conflict that was cold only for their northern overlords,” but “as witnesses and contributors to the formation and development of a global cold war discourse.”⁴⁸

It would be remiss to speak about the Third World without discussing the watershed event that aimed to reclaim this name, and the countries that were grouped under it, from the collateral position below the First and Second Worlds at the beginning of the Cold War. The 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia brought together 29 countries from

⁴⁶ Hammond, 5.

⁴⁷ Monica Popescu, “Aesthetic Solidarities: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and the Cold War,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50, no. 4 (2014), 385.

⁴⁸ Popescu, 387.

Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and China, who generated what Vijay Prashad calls “the Bandung Spirit”:

What they meant was simple: that the colonized world had now emerged to claim its space in world affairs, not just as an adjunct of the First or Second Worlds, but as a player in its own right. Furthermore, the Bandung Spirit was a refusal of both economic subordination and cultural suppression – two of the major policies of imperialism.⁴⁹

The Bandung idea of Third World solidarity and non-alignment, according to Christopher Lee, lends a positive meaning to the term “Third World,” which has become unpopular in contemporary discourse since the end of the Cold War. The Third World nations – recently decolonized states which the United States and the Soviet Union were trying to influence – wanted to construct “a novel new world order committed to human rights, self-determination, and world peace.”⁵⁰ Dipesh Chakrabarty describes economic development as the underlying force for this vision of solidarity in the moment of decolonization, arguing that the developmentalist mindset of anti-colonial leaders was a remnant of colonialism’s failure to deliver the promise of modernity. These leaders, enamored with “different versions of modernization theory that in turn made the West into a model for everyone to follow,” adopted a “pedagogical” cultural style of politics.⁵¹ This pedagogical style, when combined with the Third World leaders’ developmentalist mindset, created a focus on “catching-up-with-the-West” that Antoinette Burton suggests required countries like India to modernize in the path of Europe in a

⁴⁹ Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People’s History of the Third World* (New York: New Press, 2007), 45-46.

⁵⁰ Christopher Lee, “Introduction: Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung,” in *Making a World after Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, ed. Christopher Lee (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 15.

⁵¹ Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Legacies of Bandung: Decolonization and the Politics of Culture,” in *Making a World after Empire*, 46.

much shorter timeframe, while taking on the responsibility to teach and help those more underdeveloped than them as well.⁵²

Development, developmental pedagogy, and solidarity are all key questions for considering the dynamics within and beyond the Third World during the Cold War. Chakrabarty also discusses how the emphasis on development divided not only developed nations from their developing counterparts, but also “elites and subalterns within national boundaries.”⁵³ This split corresponds to Simon Gikandi’s division between the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ subject in African literature in the introduction of this thesis. The “conversion” or growth of such a subject, in this context, means becoming a person imbued with traits associated with the West. The Cold War provides a lens into this supposed conversion because of its preoccupation with development, which manifested not just in subject formation but also in the subjects’ relationships with one another and with their own communities. The benefits of using a Cold War lens to investigate postcolonial literatures, as Popescu suggests, are reciprocal. Literature meaningfully adds to the historical narratives of the Cold War, conventionally focused on the United States and the Soviet Union, while the Cold War perspective “illuminates the political and ideological forces at work in postcolonial literature, the aesthetic choices facing African writers, and even the blind spots in postcolonial studies treating the works of these authors.”⁵⁴ Analyzing texts with consideration towards the contexts of the Cold War, the Bandung Conference, and the Non-Aligned Movement, and how such contexts were entangled with discourses of material development and modernization, sheds light on how the African subject is

⁵² Antoinette Burton, *Africa in the Indian Imagination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012),

9.

⁵³ Chakrabarty, 53.

⁵⁴ Popescu, 384.

constructed and deconstructed by those very discourses. For *Season of Migration to the North*, *Our Sister Killjoy*, *The Morning After*, and *Gifts*, the Cold War is an inescapable context; it serves not only as a backdrop for the texts' events, but fundamentally informs the ways in which meaning is conveyed. The first three texts, in particular, focus on how the African subject that obtains a 'developed' education encounters a disconnect between themselves and developmental modernity. By facilitating the issue of development, which consequently influences national and racial relationships during movements for progress and solidarity, the Cold War links the texts' discussion of personal formation and personal relationships to the broader structures of power. The disruption of the personal and the rupture between the personal and the social, as results of this context, constitute the idea of "fragmentation" in Gikandi's discussion of African literature. In the primary texts of this thesis, such problems are embodied in the interracial sexual relationship between an African character and a character of the more 'developed' race.

Consideration of how interracial intimacies influence identity and power is not a new project.⁵⁵ In the influential text *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, Robert J. C. Young delves into how the notion of hybridity was developed during colonial times through two major "models of cultural interaction": language and sex.⁵⁶ Young tracks the history of problematizing interracial relationships back to the nineteenth century, when questions of the human and whether "the African" could be considered of the same species as the white man began to emerge among English scientists and anthropologists. He describes the definition of race during this time as a primarily cultural construct: "culture" was identified with

⁵⁵ Other works of cultural studies on intimacy and empire: *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 6.

“civilization,” connected to the Enlightenment idea of progress, “as a particular form or type of intellectual development, namely the improvement of the mind by education and training.”⁵⁷ The idea of race distinguishes the white European from all those who were not, and works against the threat of the “intermixture” of the races as a source of “degeneracy,” as it would merge the civilized blood with the uncivilized.⁵⁸ Young’s conclusion is that colonialism is bound up with the mixing of different races, with portrayals and fantasies of the colored peoples as having an “uncontrollable sexual drive” and “limitless fecundity.”⁵⁹ “Locked into the machine of desire,” colonialism constructs a system of intrinsic difference and hierarchy between civilization and savagery, while enabling sexual fantasies about non-white races as part of their formation as “uncivilized.”

While interracial relationships have been investigated for their influences during colonialism, little scholarship has systematically taken them into account in consideration of postcolonial literature. Young’s argument about racial fetishization and the possibility of regression by racial mixing informs my work in the following sections on *Season*, *Killjoy*, and *Morning After*, three postcolonial texts based in the Cold War-Bandung moment. At the same time, the kind of interracial relationship that Young focuses on, between white European men and non-white colonized women, carries fundamentally different racial and gendered power dynamics from those of the relationships in my primary texts. After decolonization, from the perspective of the African subject, the intimacies between black Africans and non-black non-Africans in these texts are imbued with more nuanced issues. I analyze scenes of interracial intimacy in these texts to understand how such relationships expose dynamics between countries

⁵⁷ Young, 32.

⁵⁸ Young, 19.

⁵⁹ Young, 181.

as structured by developmental modernity. Race especially matters in the fracturedness of such relations due to the effects of racial biases enacted under colonialism, despite contemporaneous claims for equality, empowerment, and solidarity. While *Season of Migration to the North* focuses on the sexual relationships between an Arab-African man and white women, a pivotal scene in *Our Sister Killjoy* is a sexual encounter between Sissie, a black Ghanaian woman, and Marija, a white German housewife. While these two texts both depict ‘North-South’ relationships, *The Morning After* adds an interesting angle with its depiction of a ‘South-South’ relationship between Peter Kabaku, a black Kenyan, and an unnamed Indian woman.⁶⁰ Taken collectively, these texts present different kinds of interracial intimate relationships that are all related to the subject formation of the black African characters by their development-based education, while reflecting the relationships between their underdeveloped home countries and the developed counterparts. Operating through these scenes of interracial intimacy wrought with alienation and obscurity, development in this Cold War moment reveals itself not as progress, but regression and even destruction for the African subject.

⁶⁰ I use ‘North’ and ‘South’ here in terms of the Global North and the Global South, which I have discussed in the Introduction. The transition from the language of “Third World” to Global North and South became common in the 1980s with the publication of the cited report by the Independent Commission for International Development. *The Morning After*, published in 1973, technically predates this use of the terms, but they still provide a reasonable framework for these relationships between the developed West, India, and Africa. Burton also uses “South-South” in her writing on *The Morning After* in *Africa in the Indian Imagination*. On this topic, see also: Timothy Brennan, “The Cuts of Language: The East/West of North/South,” *Public Culture* 13, no. 1 (2001): 39–64.

DESIRE AS/FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION IN *SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH*

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*, first published in Arabic in 1966 and then translated into English in 1969 by Denys Johnson-Davies in close collaboration with the author, depicts postcolonial Sudan in a turbulent period, a decade after gaining independence from the British Empire. Working with *Season* in its translated form, I recognize possible ways in which translation may have influenced the text. I also posit that *Season of Migration to the North*, originally written in Arabic, can be considered an "African novel." While most scholarship on *Season* identifies it as a classic text of Arabic literature, the issue of the African novel in Arabic remains contested in the field of African literature precisely because of the conditions of Western modernity as related to the creation of the Afro-Arabic text. On the ambiguous identity of the Afro-Arabic novel, Shaden M. Tageldin writes: "The African novel in Arabic is eccentric to Africa, in part, because the genre is eccentric to Arabic: in its modern incarnation, it owes a few genes to the colonial influence of the Western European novel."⁶¹ My analysis recognizes the complexity of these genre identifications, but addresses the issues of modernity and tradition at work in *Season* as a text written in Arabic by an East African writer, focused specifically on the social and historical conditions in decolonized Sudan during the early years of the Cold War.

The circumstances of the Cold War were especially relevant for the initial publication of the novel in the Arabic-language magazine *Ḥiwār*. As Elizabeth Holt points out in a rare study connecting *Season* with the Cold War, *Ḥiwār* was a journal created by the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a Paris-based organization that had been exposed earlier the same year as part

⁶¹ Shaden M. Tageldin, "The African Novel in Arabic" in *The Cambridge Companion to the African Novel*, ed. F. Abiola Irele (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85.

of an extensive cultural front secretly founded and funded by the CIA for the United States.⁶² While Salih himself did not evidently have any ties with the CCF, this reveal was a major scandal, especially since *Season* was published in the journal a few months after the exposure. During the post-Bandung moment of Afro-Asian solidarity, Arabic was one of the three languages along with French and English, in which the Afro-Asian Writers' Association chose to publish their own journal from Cairo. Holt asserts, "Arabic language and Arabic literature, in this moment, became a high priority cultural Cold War battleground in the wake of the 1955 Bandung Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference and the 1956 Suez crisis."⁶³ *Season's* Arabic-English translator, Johnson-Davies, had himself been closely associated with the CCF beginning in the 1950s, corresponding with an undercover CIA agent at the CCF headquarters about his vision of bringing Arabic literature to the English reader. Literature was one of the means through which the CCF attempted to draw the allegiances of the Arabic public, as they thought "Arabic cultural attachments are to the West."⁶⁴ Looking further, the Cold War is not only present in this novel through such political traces, but also in concrete references: the narrator who works for the Sudan Ministry of Education, and ministers who drive lavish American cars and go to conferences on development and education. As Holt suggests, "the lineaments of the rise of American empire with the Cold War" permeate this novel.

Season establishes from the outset its location in a small Sudanese village, with the material conditions that mark the transition between colonialism and decolonization, indigenous culture and European modernity. As a Sudanese person recently returned from seven years

⁶² Elizabeth Holt, "Al-Ṭayyib Ṣāliḥ's *Season of Migration to the North*, the CIA, and the Cultural Cold War after Bandung," *Research in African Literatures* special issue, forthcoming. I am grateful to the author for giving me permission to cite this unpublished work in the thesis.

⁶³ Holt.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Holt.

studying for a doctorate in England, the narrator provides the prime perspective from which this contemporaneous transition is witnessed. Development has its traces in the descriptions of modernization and new technology in the text. The image of water-wheels being replaced by water pumps on the Nile keeps reappearing in the narrator's consciousness: "From my position under the tree I saw the village slowly undergo a change: the water-wheels disappeared to be replaced on the bank of the Nile by pumps, each one doing the work of a hundred water-wheels."⁶⁵ The narrator even sees the water-wheel in unrelated contexts, imagining the prayer-beads in his grandfather's hand slipping "up and down like a water-wheel."⁶⁶ For a country historically focused on hydro-agriculture like Sudan, the transition from the water-wheel to water pumps on the Nile was a real, significant infrastructural change from the 1940s onwards to better control the river flow. Harry Verhoeven describes this project as "colonising the Nile," begun by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium as a joint English-Egyptian government in the Sudan.⁶⁷ Thus, the text's descriptions of the Nile and its water pumps serve to contextualize the modernizing moment of Sudan, while the narrator's fixation on the water-wheel signifies his nostalgia for the past. He considers the infrastructure and facilities left by the British to be one of the only good things about colonialism: "Sooner or later they will leave our country, just as many people throughout history left many countries. The railways, ships, hospitals, factories and schools will be ours and we'll speak their language without a sense of guilt or a sense of gratitude. Once again we shall be as we are – ordinary people – and if we are lies we shall be lies of our own

⁶⁵ Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, trans. Denys Johnson-Davies, New York Review Books Classics (New York: New York Review of Books, 2009): 6.

⁶⁶ Salih, 69.

⁶⁷ Harry Verhoeven, *Water, Civilisation and Power in Sudan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 61.

making.”⁶⁸ The text’s address of the postcolonial, modernizing moment manifests physically in such remnants of European modernity.

Saree Makdisi’s influential reading of *Season* situates it within the historical debate in postcolonial Arab discourse between traditionalism and Westernism. Makdisi discusses the work of nineteenth-century scholar Rifaah al-Tahtawi, who had a strong influence on Arab cultural production, insisting on modernization for the Arab world by

"adopting" the European sciences. For Tahtawi, the European states (particularly France) became standards to which Arabs could aspire, although in order to "be modern," one had somehow to "become European." The goal of the process of modernization, as it was formulated by Tahtawi, is therefore impossible; it means becoming Other.⁶⁹

Thus, development’s central idea of modernization following Europe was very much a part of this discourse. Makdisi asserts that the struggle between state-supported traditionalism and the Westernizing ideal of the *Nahda*, a cultural “renaissance” movement in the Arab world that gave rise to Arab nationalism in the beginning of the twentieth century, is central to an understanding of *Season* as lying between and rejecting the dichotomies of East and West, of tradition and modern. It does not protest against the legacy of colonialism by reaching back to the past, “groping blindly for what is gone,” but uses nonlinear temporality and destabilized narrative and form to leave its readers “floating uneasily in the present, waiting for a resolution that does not come.”⁷⁰ This reading especially addresses the way the text conveys the life story of Mustafa Sa’eed, whom the narrator meets upon his return to the village and who soon becomes the main point of intrigue for the narrator and the text itself.

⁶⁸ Salih, 42.

⁶⁹ Saree Makdisi, “The Empire Renarrated: ‘Season of Migration to the North’ and the Reinvention of the Present,” *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 4 (1992), 806.

⁷⁰ Makdisi, 808.

Told in a frame narrative, a story-within-a-story, Mustafa's history from when he was a young boy chosen for his singular intellect in British-ruled Sudan, to when he went for university studies in England and became a scholar in Economics, can be read as a fairly typical tale of colonial education. The narrative of Mustafa entering the titular "North" has been most often portrayed as the counternarrative to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The most famous of such readings is by Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism*, in which he argues that Mustafa's story is an example of the "voyage in," contrary to the "voyage out" into the colonial territory of Conrad's text.⁷¹ According to Said, this "voyage in" was facilitated by movements of students from the colonies into the metropole in the interwar period, creating a generation of colonial intellectuals who resisted against empire using empire's own languages and knowledge.⁷² Said draws parallels between the ways that Conrad and Salih respectively employ the presence of the river, the voyages from Europe to Africa and from Africa to Europe, and even Kurtz's fence of skulls and the "inventory of European books stacked in [Mustafa's] secret library."⁷³ This reversal of memorable images in *Heart of Darkness* makes *Season* a text that complicates and criticizes the classic rhetoric of the imperial romance.

While Said's reading has been highly generative for scholarship on *Season*, and there is little doubt that *Heart of Darkness* had an influence on later texts regarding race and empire, several aspects about *Season* complicate direct associations between the two novels. The interplay of the two narratives, of Mustafa and the narrator, in the form of the novel, as Makdisi argues, is itself a contradiction – the inclusion of Arabic literary forms in a Western genre.

⁷¹ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 244. Emphasis in original.

⁷² Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 242-3.

⁷³ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 211.

Makdisi cites Barbara Harlow's assertion that the novel contains features of the literary technique *mu'arada*, which involves two writers writing along the same line of a poem but with reverse meanings.⁷⁴ The various references to not only *Heart of Darkness* but also Shakespeare's *Othello* and E.M Forster's *A Passage to India* show that the text is consciously maneuvering the Western canon while telling an Arab story. Benita Parry compares the style of the two separate but interrelated narratives to the storytelling of a *hakawati*, a kind of public storyteller in the Arab world.⁷⁵ Parry goes on to argue that this oral form, together with the *mu'arada* style of combining contradictory stories, works to portray Mustafa's journey and experiences in the North as "a stylized tale of natal displacement, alienation from the English and revenge against the North, pieced together and reworked by the narrator from the spoken and written words of a tormented immoralist and an angry anti-colonialist..."⁷⁶ The nonlinear and scattered manner in which Mustafa's story is told to the narrator forces the reader to make their own conjectures, while being suspended in the vivid scenes of Mustafa's experiences in London. "Everything which happened before my meeting her was a premonition; everything I did after I killed her was an apology, not for killing her, but for the lie that was my life," Mustafa states ominously, after taking the narrator through the first years of his life.⁷⁷ This sense of premonition permeates Mustafa's telling of the story; he considers the tragedies that befell him in England to be unavoidable, an inherent part of his fate as a black man in the North, an Othello among the whites. His journey to England sees him constantly pondering the image of inevitability of the bow and arrow already set to shoot – "the string of the bow is drawn taut and the arrow must

⁷⁴ Makdisi, 815.

⁷⁵ Benita Parry, "Reflections on the Excess of Empire in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*," *Paragraph* 28, no. 2 (2005), 74.

⁷⁶ Parry, 74.

⁷⁷ Salih, 26.

needs shoot forth” and “...the bowstring had become more taut. The arrow will shoot forth towards other unknown horizons.”⁷⁸ The nonlinear temporality of Mustafa’s storytelling, jumping randomly from one point in his life to another, compressing significant events such as his seven years in prison into very little language, speaks to the text’s emphasis on how the events of Mustafa’s life are considered and represented, rather than what those events actually were. The text’s different forms of fracturedness reveal a “voyage in” that is neither generative nor benevolent per the promise of education in the center.

It is necessary to analyze Mustafa’s narrative, despite it being set some 30 years before the Cold War moment of the narrator’s story, because it is an embedded text that influences the narrator’s primary text.⁷⁹ Read separately, Mustafa’s tale is solely that of a colonial subject in the period after World War I, with all the issues of education, gender, and race that many critical accounts have addressed.⁸⁰ Read as a text that provides meaning for the decolonized, modernizing moment at which Cold War dynamics are creating problems for Sudan, Mustafa’s story generates insights for understanding the narrator’s contemporaneity due to the mentality prioritizing Western modernity, a result of colonialism. This way of focalizing highlights the

⁷⁸ Salih, 24-25.

⁷⁹ I use the terms “embedded” and “primary” texts following Mieke Bal’s formulation in *Narratology*.

⁸⁰ There continues to be a robust body of critical work on *Season*, much of which analyze Mustafa’s story from many angles. See for example (in chronological order): Paul Klee and Muhammed Siddiq, “The Process of Individuation in Al-Tayyeb Salih’s Novel *Season of Migration To the North*,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 9, no. 1 (1978), 67–104; Patricia Geesey, “Cultural Hybridity and Contamination in Tayeb Salih’s ‘Mawsim al-hijra ila al-Shamal (Season of Migration to the North)’,” *Research in African Literatures* 28, no. 3, *Arabic Writing in Africa* (1997), 128-140; Wail S. Hassan, *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003); Musa Al-Halool, “The Nature of the Uncanny in *Season of Migration to the North*,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2008), 31-38; and Jay Rajiva, “‘The Instant of Waking from the Nightmare’: Emergence Theory and Postcolonial Experience in *Season of Migration to the North*,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 52, no. 6 (2016), 687–99.

important role of colonial education, and an English education in general, in connecting Mustafa and the narrator in a way that Mustafa doesn't have with anyone else. The connection forged by the two characters' shared Western education drives the logic of the novel, and feels as if it's supposed to be obvious – while the narrator constantly questions why Mustafa trusts him to be the guardian for his family despite not knowing him very well at all. What they studied were also drastically different: Mustafa earned a doctorate in Economics, while the narrator got one in English Literature, but the Western origin of both education seems more important to them than the technicality of the knowledge. After Mustafa has confided his life story to him, the narrator's obsession takes up a form of identification with Mustafa; he asks himself, “Was it likely that what had happened to Mustafa Sa'eed could have happened to me? He had said that he was a lie, so was I also a lie? I am from here – is not this reality enough?”⁸¹ If their Western education is what connects them, so too is the conflict between tradition and modernity that Mustafa encounters, which the narrator has to confront in his own time period. This understanding allows us to read further into Mustafa's experience of modernity through his sexual relationships with white British women, and connect it to gauge what the text is conveying for its Cold War moment.

Interracial sex lies at the juncture of the themes of race, sexuality, and gender that *Season* deals with; Mustafa's sexual exploits in England frame the major conflicts of his story. Wail Hassan portrays such exploits as “a grim revenge on colonialism marked by sexism and misogyny,” wherein Mustafa jokingly vows to “liberate Africa with [his] penis.”⁸² Hassan's reading of the interracial sexual relations takes Mustafa at his word and sees him as a predator

⁸¹ Salih, 41.

⁸² Wail Hassan, *Tayeb Salih: Ideology and the Craft of Fiction* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 92.

taking vengeance on European colonialism: “For him, seducing women is a reclamation of masculinity, a metonymic equivalent of conquering territory, and a symbolic revenge on Europe for the crime that inspires the title of his book: feminizing and raping Africa.”⁸³ In *Trials of Arab Modernity*, Tarek El-Ariss takes a more moderate position on the issue of interracial sex in this novel, by considering the tendency of literary texts on the Arab encounter with modernity as depicting “the transformative experience of a male Arab student studying in France or England.”⁸⁴ Such encounters, mediated through romantic or sexual relationships with white European women, are considered to reflect the interactions between the traditional and the modern.⁸⁵ Thus understood, the purpose of interracial relationships, especially in terms of sex and intimacy, in this text becomes not about hatred and revenge on colonialism, but a desire for progress. “Progress” here is used both in terms of personal and national, as they are interconnected in the literary imagination; as Hassan suggests, “desire for the north becomes desire for the European woman.”⁸⁶ In the following analysis, I focus on one particular scene of interracial intimacy that is tinged with sensuality but is not actually sex, which comes at the end of *Season* and serves a pivotal role in the plot as well as the characterization of Mustafa, to show how this scene reveals the African subject’s problematic relationship to developmental modernity.

The figure that haunts Mustafa throughout his life after his decision to embark on a series of sexual conquests in England is Jean Morris, his late wife, the only one of all the white women he had affairs with that he married. Mustafa’s murder of Jean, for which he spent seven years in

⁸³ Hassan, 92.

⁸⁴ Tarek El-Ariss, *Trials of Arab Modernity: Literary Affects and the New Political* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 88.

⁸⁵ El-Ariss, 89.

⁸⁶ Hassan, 17.

English prison, is the main suspense of the novel, which he foreshadows very early on in his telling of his life to the narrator. Because of the way in which Mustafa's story slowly unfolds through the narrator's 'reading' of it, recalling different sections of it throughout the primary frame of the text, the pivotal scene of killing does not appear until near the novel's end. In Mustafa's account, his relationship with Jean is unique; while he has successfully seduced many white women with his enactment of Orientalist fantasies, his whispered claims of being Othello, Jean was the first woman to resist his advances. 'Unique' is perhaps an easy word; the one Mustafa has used to describe this complicated relationship is "hate."⁸⁷ Its complicated nature has to do with how Jean insists on taking down the theatre of Orientalist fetishization that Mustafa has built around himself, his façade of exotic intellectualism; she breaks "an expensive Wedgewood vase on the mantelpiece," a "rare Arabic manuscript on the table," a "silken Isphahan prayer-rug."⁸⁸ In making his bedroom an Orientalist "operating theatre in a hospital," he has put on display these precious items to construct a role for himself that fits into the image of the Arab-African in the English imagination.⁸⁹ By being the only woman who wants him as a "savage bull that does not weary of the chase" rather than the curated presentations of a mix of English and Arabic high culture, Jean Morris confronts Mustafa's very selfhood, which was constructed by his English high education.

Mustafa's initial arrival in Europe is wrought with an emptiness, one which he tries to fill with white women, who fall for his curated image of exactly what they want from him. This stereotypical image of the Arab-African 'king' shows how astutely Mustafa is employing his knowledge of white fantasies regarding the black man. After adopting this role of the civilized

⁸⁷ Salih, 132.

⁸⁸ Salih, 129-30.

⁸⁹ Salih, 27.

‘savage’ to serve his purpose of conquering white women, Mustafa begins to internalize it – he is described before the court in his trial for Jean’s murder as “a noble person whose mind was able to absorb Western civilization but it broke his heart.”⁹⁰ To “absorb Western civilization,” in Mustafa’s case, is to follow its rationale and fashion a self-image appropriate for it. He has created a ‘civilized’ self, but what Jean wants and sees of him is the ‘savage’ – both of which are images of the black person that white colonial society has produced and tried to force them into. This conflict between barbarism and civilization underlies the scene in which Mustafa plunges a knife into Jean Morris, a scene that I argue is one of interracial “intimacy” despite its violent nature. “This was a night of reckoning,” Mustafa remarks that fateful night, setting up a contrast between himself as being filled with a hot fire and Jean as “the cold.”⁹¹ Contrary to their usually antagonistic interaction, on this night it is tender:

Though her lips were formed into a full smile, there was something like sadness on her face; it was as though she was in a state of great readiness both to give and to take. On first seeing her my heart was filled with tenderness and I felt that Satanic warmth under the diaphragm which tells me that I am in control of the situation. Where had this warmth been all these years?⁹²

As Jean is lying naked on the bed and Mustafa gazes at her, this scene through his description carries the tenderness and sensuality of an intimate scene. Mustafa’s racial consciousness is highlighted by his repeated description of her open, white thighs. The only thing unusual about this vision is the presence of the knife, the flashing blade a point of focus if this were on a stage. Mustafa pressing the knife in her breast gives Jean “what ecstasy there was in those eyes!”⁹³ This moment, when Mustafa yields to the ‘barbarous’ side of his nature, to the “Satanic warmth” in

⁹⁰ Salih, 29.

⁹¹ Salih, 134.

⁹² Salih, 135.

⁹³ Salih, 136.

his chest, which Jean has hoped for, is the moment of another fulfilled fantasy and another destroyed self. In so doing Mustafa is not getting to his ‘intrinsic self,’ but filling another racialized role assigned to people like him. Jean may not have believed his intellectual, exotic front, but the barbaric one she believes lay within him is just as toxic. As a colonial subject educated in England, Mustafa is created as subject to the ‘civilized’ Western modernity because there is no other way for him to be. To plunge the knife into Jean Morris is to kill that form of subjecthood, but there is also no accepted alternative besides being viewed as a savage creature. It is also an outcome that Mustafa treats as a self-fulfilling prophecy that he cannot escape from: “here are my ships, my darling, sailing towards the shores of destruction.”⁹⁴ This double bind embodies the impossible space that black African subjects occupy in relation to the mindset of modernization and developmental modernity.

This scene of violent yet intimate interracial relations speaks to Robert Young’s claim for the establishment of a racial hierarchy within colonial desire. At the same time, the dynamic revealed here also points to the conflict between certain visions of ‘tradition’ and ‘modern,’ both of which are assigned to the African subject in the moment of modernization. The dynamic portrayed between Mustafa Sa’eed and Jean Morris is not simply between the colonized and colonizer. It reveals the problem of the racially embedded modern-traditional, white European-black African hierarchy in its framing as an unpreventable outcome of “destruction.” Despite the drive to empower the underdeveloped subject through education in the center, *Season* conveys a message that intimate interactions between different registers of developmental modernity cannot result in anything but tragedy. This message is taken up and questioned later by *Our Sister*

⁹⁴ Salih, 136.

Killjoy, which has a different framework focused on gender and sexuality that problematizes *Season*'s classic portrayal of interracial relations.

QUEERING THE TRAGIC INTERRACIAL ROMANCE IN *OUR SISTER KILLJOY*

In Ama Ata Aidoo's 1977 novel *Our Sister Killjoy*, the African subject's journey and encounters in Europe are constantly textually interrupted. The main character is called Sissie, short for "Sister," which is what she says everyone calls her, but her real name is never revealed. Sissie, a young university student in Accra, Ghana, finds herself whisked away to Germany one day on an educational exchange trip, during which she is put in a castle-turned-youth hostel with other students from poor countries, to do volunteer work and interact with the civilized Europeans. This trip, simple as it sounds, is special; Sissie is soon reminded at a party attended by the German ambassador in Ghana that she was a unique case, "unbelievably lucky to have been chosen for the trip... And that, somehow, going to Europe was altogether more like a dress rehearsal for a journey to paradise."⁹⁵ As the text begins with the scathing critique of the "academic-pseudo-intellectual," who can "regurgitate only what he has learned from bosses," which includes "universal truth, universal art, universal literature and the Gross National Product," it is clearly framed to address Western knowledge and the "moderate" Africans whom it is beginning to infiltrate.⁹⁶ Pitched against that male image is Sissie, a young woman, whom Caroline Rooney argues "revolts against ... the European assimilation of that which is or those who are African, of what belongs in and to Africa."⁹⁷ Through the journey to Europe, the conflict between Sissie's background in underdeveloped Ghana and developed Europe rises to the surface.

⁹⁵ Ama Ata Aidoo, *Our Sister Killjoy* (London: Longman, 1988), 9.

⁹⁶ Aidoo, 6.

⁹⁷ Caroline Rooney, "'Dangerous Knowledge' and the Poetics of Survival: A Reading of *Our Sister Killjoy* and *A Question of Power*," in *Motherlands*, ed. Susheila Nasta (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 103.

After she comes to Europe, Sissie is created as a subject simply by the question of her name. Her identity as Sissie in Ghana symbolizes the familial, communal, and oral traditions of her background; this is also reflected in the novel's title with "our sister." Edward Sackey remarks that *Our Sister Killjoy*'s form, experimental in its use of verse mixed with prose, is informed by the Akan folklore, an oral tradition of Ghana.⁹⁸ "Our Sister" also reappears when the novel seems to be discussing Sissie *with* the reader, including the reader into the observations of the narrative. In passages such as: "But my brother, / They got / Far / Enough" and "Ow, my brother ... / Indeed there was a time when / Voices sang / Horns blew / Drums rolled to / Hail [...]," the reader is implicated in the call of "my brother."⁹⁹ Such a move, according to Sackey, reflects the oral tradition that the text emerges from, as the Akan folktale invites the reader's participation; the implication of the narrator as related to the reader "underscores an African aesthetic philosophy that the artist must be part of what she or he represents or criticizes."¹⁰⁰ The Akan oral tradition's influence on *Killjoy* extends beyond the style of the text to the way Sissie as a character is constructed. If in Ghana she is just "Sissie," in Europe the need for further identification arises, when Marija asks Sissie for her name and for an explanation of why she is called "Sissie," or when the unnamed love interest asks, as one of the final lines of the novel, what Sissie's name is beyond "what everyone calls" her.¹⁰¹ By being the space in which Sissie's identity is questioned, Europe destabilizes her selfhood to try and force her into its rationale.

⁹⁸ Edward Sackey, "Oral Tradition and the African Novel," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 37, no. 3 (1991), 403.

⁹⁹ Aidoo, 25-26.

¹⁰⁰ Sackey, 404.

¹⁰¹ Aidoo, 131.

Coming to Europe also marks Sissie's racialization, wherein she is created as black and realizes herself as black for the first time. The moment of racialization is clear as she enters a space that seems to automatically register her difference:

“So she walked along in her gay, gold and leafy brown cloth, looking, feasting her village eyes.
Cloths. Perfume. Flowers. Fruits.
Then polished steel. Polished tin. Polished brass. Cut glass. Plastic.”¹⁰²

The European space wrought with the artificial materials of modernity, the “polished,” “cut” metals, glass, and plastic, comes across as the stark contrast to Sissie's “village eyes,” her earthy, warm colored clothes of Africa. Her noticing racial differences only comes after she is called a “black girl,” upon which it “hit her” how the people around her are different from her. Similar to *Season of Migration to the North*, *Our Sister Killjoy* has been read as a counter-narrative to colonial travel tales such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: in opposition to the story of a male, white, European colonial figure entering Africa, Sissie's narrative is that of a black, African woman coming from the periphery to the center, radically transforming the racist and colonialist meaning of the classic voyage “into darkness.”¹⁰³ What such readings do is aligning the subjectivity of Sissie with that of Marlow's in *Heart of Darkness*, viewing *Sister* purely as a way of “writing back” to the colonial narrative of Africa while borrowing Conrad's thematic choices. However, it is worth noting that Sissie's travel to Germany reflects the real-life

¹⁰² Aidoo, 12.

¹⁰³ See Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, “An Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo,” *The Massachusetts Review* 36, No. 1 (1995); Hildegard Hoeller, “Ama Ata Aidoo's Heart of Darkness,” *Research in African Literatures* 35, no. 1 (2004); Byron Caminero-Santangelo, “Struggling toward the Postcolonial: the Ghost of Conrad in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*,” in *African Literature and Joseph Conrad: Reading Postcolonial Textuality* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005); and Cheryl Sterling, “Can You Really See through a Squint? Theoretical Underpinnings in Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 45, no. 1 (2010).

migration movement from Ghana to Germany beginning in the 1960s. According to a 2009 report on the Ghanaian diaspora in Germany by the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ghanaians began moving to Germany as “educational migrants” in the 1960s and 70s; they chose Germany because of the lower tuition and fees there than in the United Kingdom or the United States.¹⁰⁴ In such a context, Sissie’s voyage to the ‘center’ is not just a literary choice, but a historical reality facilitated by the conditions of a world influenced by decolonization, the Cold War, and new forms of imperialism after 1945. As such, Sissie’s view of Europe cannot be equated to Marlow’s view of Africa.

My reading so far of *Our Sister Killjoy* has focused on how Sissie, as an individual character and the primary perspective of the text, is constructed as a subject upon her arrival in Europe. However, the very form of this text as an African novel written in English – as with Nuruddin Farah’s *Gifts*, which I will discuss in depth in a later section – marks its precarious position in the dialectic of modernity and tradition. According to F. Abiola Irele, such African texts written in European languages have a “double formal relation – to the European conventions of literate expression and the indigenous tradition of orality”; they are “an effort to reintegrate a discontinuity of experience in a new consciousness and imagination.”¹⁰⁵ As an African text that merges African oral techniques into the Western novel form, *Killjoy* is simultaneously concerned with the personal and the political. If the prose part of the text tracks Sissie’s journey and encounters in Europe in a narrative manner, this narrative is constantly

¹⁰⁴ Andrea Schmelz, *The Ghanaian Diaspora in Germany: Its Contribution to Development in Ghana* (Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH, 2009), 10.

¹⁰⁵ F. Abiola Irele, *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

interrupted with free-verse poetry that enters the characters' thoughts, or diverges the narrative flow completely to reflect on the realities of educational aid and subject formation. Analyzing Aidoo's use of "unusual typography and odd structure" in this text, Kofi Owusu suggests that it reflects the quest for an African literature about women and for women: "how does the African female writer define herself in relation to the male-dominated 'tradition' of African literature, on one extreme, and womanism or Euro-American-inspired feminism, at the other?"¹⁰⁶ The text's multivocality, according to Owusu, points to different critical registers that were deliberately used to muddle interpretation.¹⁰⁷ Particularly, the use of poetry exposes linguistic gaps, in which silence "made itself heard" in Sissie's narrative, aligning with the silences inherent in women's experiences.¹⁰⁸ I argue that this multivocality also works to complicate ideas of knowledge and how Western knowledge influences the African subject.

One example of a turn in the text where the inclusion of poetry rejects narrative coherence and where the poetry itself brings up thematic concerns for the text, is when Sissie comes to England and faces African students studying there in hopes of bettering their own lives. She comes across them in the street, where the narrative pauses and focalizes through Sissie, who "bled as she tried to take the scene in," talking to wretched-looking black students. The educational exchange programs provided to these African students come into focus here, as some students are revealed to be receiving scholarships from their own governments, and some "were the recipients of the leftovers of imperial handouts."¹⁰⁹ In the official account of these projects, students who study overseas are mostly in the scientific and technical fields, and this information

¹⁰⁶ Kofi Owusu, "Canons Under Siege: Blackness, Femaleness, and Ama Ata Aidoo's *Our Sister Killjoy*," *Callaloo* 13, no. 2 (1990), 349.

¹⁰⁷ Owusu, 353.

¹⁰⁸ Aidoo, 130.

¹⁰⁹ Aidoo, 86.

is reflected in the novel's recount of the students' technical and skill-focused studies: engineering and law for the males, and dressmaking and hairdressing for the females.¹¹⁰

However, this knowledge acquisition only works to further the project of empire:

But did I hear you say
Awards?
Awards?
Awards?

What
Dainty name to describe
This
Most merciless
Most formalised

Open,
Thorough,
Spy system of all time:

For a few pennies now and a
Doctoral degree later,
Tell us about
Your people
Your history
Your mind.
Your mind.
Your mind.¹¹¹

With the switch in form, comes the switch in focalization: from the musings in Sissie's own mind, the text abruptly turns to a string of thoughts in an omniscient speaker's consciousness, who is critical of the project of higher education for the African subject and implied to be African themselves through the addresses "our poor administrators at home" and "my brother" that would come at the end of the passage. The use of anaphora with "Awards? / Awards? / Awards?" and "Your mind. / Your mind. / Your mind." imitates speech amplified in thought,

¹¹⁰ Varghese, 14.

¹¹¹ Aidoo, 87.

creating a haunting effect that emphasizes a new project of infiltration, of domination: not by explicit violence upon the body as in colonial times, but coercion of the mind with the promise of glory. Even as the text morphs back briefly into prose, this omniscient voice remains, with the powerful commentary that this new project is “as old as empires”: “Oppressed multitudes from the provinces rush to the imperial seat because that is where they know all salvation comes from. But as other imperial subjects in other times and other places have discovered, for the slave, there is nothing at the center but more slavery.”¹¹² No matter how education and development of the underdeveloped are framed as for their own benefit in the new global order after colonialism, this order with a developed “center” – the language of world-systems theory – is no different from imperialism, and the underdeveloped no different from the slave.

With Sissie thus established as a black African subject in Europe and understanding the various ways by which Western knowledge continues to govern the mind after colonialism, Sissie’s relationship with Marija, a young German housewife whom she met early on in her time in Germany, comes into focus as a lens for viewing the effect of developmental modernity on Sissie. One of the central metaphors for *Our Sister Killjoy* is that of the plum. The novel’s second section, titled “The Plums,” portrays the blossoming of the relationship between Sissie and Marija – a relationship that is friendly, romantic, and sensual, while fraught with issues of race and nationality. Sissie loves plums; she has never seen it before coming to Germany, and while Marija prepares many kinds of fruit for her, the plums are what particularly draws her attention: “But / The plums. / What plums. / Such plums.”¹¹³ Without realizing it, Sissie is drawn to the plum because it embodies herself as well as her relationship with Marija: she is a “rare

¹¹² Aidoo, 88.

¹¹³ Aidoo, 38.

article, / Being / Loved.”¹¹⁴ These “plumb berries with skin-colour almost like her own” are represented as Marija’s product of love, which she spent hours picking and preparing in polythene bags for Sissie. The plums are an apt metaphor for Sissie and Marija’s relationship, as it embodies not just the image of Sissie’s skin color, her “youth” and “peace of mind” as the text suggests, but also the gender aspects underlying their attachment to each other – Marija’s domestic labor, the way she was taught to show love and care. Brenna Munro credits *Our Sister Killjoy* with sparking inspiration for many later African novels that tackle the theme of female same-sex sexuality between a black and a white woman.¹¹⁵ However, the novel’s description of Sissie’s and Marija’s involvement has also been considered by some as dismissing this lesbian connection as “deviant behavior.”¹¹⁶ I analyze the primary scene of intimacy between the two characters to contest such a reading, showing how the text’s integrated verse-prose form allows for nuanced representations of both characters, rather than making either of them a caricature of blackness, whiteness, Africa, or Europe, or reducing their relationship to a postcolonial version of racially biased colonial love stories. Despite not occupying much space in the novel overall, this interracial lesbian relationship reveals many of *Killjoy*’s themes on the relationship between the black African student and European modernity during the Cold War, while remaining critical of both sides of the nexus.

Sissie’s and Marija’s relationship begins as remarkably romantic, an idealistic vision of two lovers not caring about the rest of the world. Even as Sissie lives in the youth hostel away

¹¹⁴ Aidoo, 40.

¹¹⁵ Brenna M. Munro, “States of Emergence: Writing African Female Same-sex Sexuality,” *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 21, no. 2 (2017), 187.

¹¹⁶ Flora Veit-Wild and Dirk Naguschewski, “Introduction: Lifting the Veil of Secrecy,” *Body, Sexuality, and Gender: Versions and Subversions in African Literatures 1*, ed. Flora Veit-Wild and Dirk Naguschewski (New York, NY: Rodopi, 2005), xvi.

from her, Marija comes to meet and take her to the home Marija shares with her absent factory-worker husband and small child everyday, raising concerns among the people about their “perverse” relationship.¹¹⁷ When the two women walk arm-in-arm by the river late at night, “they walked on. Happy then, just to be alive,” even as their being together draws questions from passer-bys because of their races.¹¹⁸ It becomes clear how the text sets up such romantic moments, when Sissie contemplates “what a delicious love affair she and Marija would have had if one of them had been a man.” Her continued imaginings bear a direct reference to the trope of the dangerous interracial relationship between an African man and a white woman, for which *Season of Migration to the North* is a prime example:

Especially if she, Sissie had been a man. She had imagined and savoured the tears, their anguish at knowing that their love was doomed. But they would make promises to each other which of course would not stand a chance of getting fulfilled. She could see Marija’s tears...

That was a game. A game in which one day, she became so absorbed, she forgot who she was, and the fact that she was a woman. In her imagination, she was one of these black boys in one of these involvements with white girls in Europe.¹¹⁹

On the one hand, Sissie’s imagined scenes carry the text’s critique of the male-centered narratives, in which the epitome of interracial contact is between a black man and white woman. Such narratives are so pervasive that even Sissie, a woman hitherto highly conscious of her subordinated position both in Ghana and in Europe, temporarily forgets herself and imagines herself in the role of the male. On the other hand, describing a same-sex relationship in this manner reveals the utter impossibility of such a relationship – interracial *and* homosexual, crossing the worlds of the underdeveloped and the developed – within the text’s temporal setting.

¹¹⁷ Aidoo, 44.

¹¹⁸ Aidoo, 47.

¹¹⁹ Aidoo, 61.

Previously in this thesis, I have expressed skepticism about critical readings that align *Sister* strictly with *Heart of Darkness*. However, Sissie's description of the walk upstairs to Marija's bedroom is clearly a direct reference to the voyage to the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*: "As they went up the stairs, all images of twentieth century modernia escaped Sissie. Rather, what with the time of night, it seemed to her as though she was moving, not up, but down into some primeval cave."¹²⁰ It is interesting, and ironic, that approaching the bedroom, an everyday space of domesticity, is equated to the temporality-crossing, progress-reversing journey of the colonial romance. This small trek reveals Sissie's consciousness of her moment of modernity, as well as of the "primeval" state. The "cave," Marija's and her husband's bedroom, is also sketched with strokes of primitivist language: a "giant rock" with white walls, a "giant white bed [...] waiting to be used."¹²¹ A few descriptions of cosmetics and small items capture a scene of sterile domesticity and performative femininity: a "deserted looking chamber" with "its simple funereal elegance," "one book, a handkerchief..." "bottled affairs from the beauty business [...] tall and elegant with slender necks and copious bottoms, their tops glittering golden over bodies that exuded delicate femaleness in their pastel delicacy."¹²² The bedroom is the natural backdrop for any scene of intimacy; *Season* shows Mustafa fully exploiting the theatrical potential of his bedroom, turning it into an Orientalist fantasy with rugs, decorations, sandalwood incense,...

The setting of Marija's bedroom, on the contrary, is sparse and uncurated, depicted almost as a scene of untainted innocence. It exposes her unhappy relationship with her husband, ridden with assigned gender and social rules, as she is forced to stay home while her husband must go to work all the time to pay for their mortgage. Her relationship with Sissie, through such a setup, is

¹²⁰ Aidoo, 62.

¹²¹ Aidoo, 63.

¹²² Aidoo, 63.

also established as different from that between Mustafa and his conquests: they may both be interracial relationships, but the former is imagined as free from racial biases, while the latter is built upon those same biases.

Sissie and Marija's sexual encounter reveals their respectively complex humanities, and evokes the historical and social conditions that have made their relationship possible, albeit briefly and in secret. Their kiss comes in a haze of dissociation, with Marija's cold hand touching Sissie's breast while the other hand "groped round and round Sissie's midriff, searching for something to hold on to."¹²³ This lost, groping hand is what "woke her up to the reality of Marija's embrace" to feel "the warmth of her tears" and "the hotness of her lips."¹²⁴ This reality, in which Marija tries to hold on to Sissie as if she were a life-saving force, her hot tears and lips revealing pain and desperation, sobers Sissie up to the nature of their relationship. In that desolate bedroom, the distance between Sissie's home village and this "love-nest in an attic" seems clearer than ever:

Sissie thought of home. To the time when she was a child in the village. Of how she always liked to be sleeping in the bedchamber when it rained, her body completely-wrapped in one of her mother's akatado-cloths while mother herself pounded fufu in the anteroom which also served as a kitchen when it rained. Oo, to be wrapped up in mother's cloth when it rained. Every time it rained. And now where was she? How did she get there? Which strings, pulled by whom, drew her into those pinelands where not so long ago human beings stoked their own funeral pyres with other human beings, where now a young Aryan housewife kisses a young black woman with such desperation right in the middle of her own nuptial chamber, with its lower middle-class cosiness?¹²⁵

The contrast between the warmth of her home, her mother's wrap, a rural family life, and the German bedroom like a white hollow cave lacking life and love, makes Sissie more conscious

¹²³ Aidoo, 64.

¹²⁴ Aidoo, 64.

¹²⁵ Aidoo, 64.

than ever of the absence of modernity in that room. If the vision of her childhood at home is a rural scene with her mother's manual labor, Marija's bedroom is not far from the grotesque history of Nazism and war. The circumstances are surreal because without modernity, it is hard to fathom how those two visions could have come together in that kiss. From the imagined development process that drives the educational program to send Sissie to Germany, to Marija's unhappiness in her marriage with an absent husband too busy working in a factory to pay off debts, those "strings" all fall under the tragedy of modernization and industrialization. The pain of this realization does not indicate an "impossibility of a solidarity" between the two women because of the racial identities bounding them, as Susan Arndt argues in her analysis of the same scene.¹²⁶ Mutual intimacy and sympathy are possible – Sissie's and Marija's long conversations and walks in the park prove this. Unlike the heterosexual interracial sexual encounter in *Season of Migration to the North*, which operates within the racial divide, the scene of interracial intimacy in *Our Sister Killjoy*, as an interaction between two women, transgresses racial separation. It locates and criticizes the source of pains pervading both Northern and Southern identities, from large-scale relationships between countries through the configuration of aid, to the everyday interaction between people in their most personal spaces.

The intimate scene between Sissie and Marija is described mostly in prose; however, verse then enters the text to better express emotions and input more ideas didactically:

L
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L
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N

¹²⁶ Susan Arndt, "Boundless Whiteness? Feminism and White Women in the Mirror of African Feminist Writing." *Matatu* 29–30, no. 1 (2005), 165.

E
S
S

Forever falling like a tear out of a woman's eye.¹²⁷

The use of capital letters and graphic poem form, to emphasize the word “loneliness” as a tear streak, answers the questions of space, of time, of self that have plagued Sissie in the wake of the kiss. Sissie knows the problems of “Europe”: its “bullying slavers and slave-traders,” its “missionaries who risked the cannibal’s pot to bring the world to the heathen hordes,” its “homicidal plantation owners,” all the people and institutions who once brought the world so much pain. The rational side of her understands that she shouldn’t weep for them, for Marija and her loneliness, but she has cried anyway. It is easy to read characters like Sissie and Marija only as embodiment of thoughts and roles representing the two different worlds of Africa and Europe, but what makes *Our Sister Killjoy* compelling is its ability to tell more complex stories and evoke difficult images through the integration of poetry in an otherwise uncomplicated narrative. This Cold War moment was when associations with East Germany takes a young Ghanaian student to Frankfurt and puts her in the embrace of a poor Bavarian housewife, when Sissie along with her fellow students from the Third World “hear the same story; / Rulers / Asleep to all things at / All times –“ and “sweet foreign aid” never spreads too far from their capital. In such a context, a consciousness of modernity and its metamorphoses is nonetheless felt through personal, bodily contact rather than intellectual detachment.¹²⁸ The queer interracial intimacy between Sissie and Marija allows for a depiction of modernity that is aware of the operating tradition-modern dichotomy, while gaining a sense of empathy and possibility that the intimacy of an earlier time in *Season* does not have. Chanakya Sen’s *The Morning After*, which portrays a

¹²⁷ Aidoo, 65.

¹²⁸ Aidoo, 34-35.

heterosexual interracial relationship, also abstains from the possibility of hope in its depiction of a South-South relationship in the period of supposed solidarity.

DISEMBODIED DEVELOPMENT, SUTURED SOLIDARITY IN *THE MORNING AFTER*

The Morning After: A Non-Novel by Chanakya Sen was originally published in Bengali in 1960 as *Rajpath Janpath*, then re-written in English by the author himself and published in 1973. A work typically considered non-canonical in English literary studies, this “non-Novel” has garnered more critical attention in recent years with its specific depiction of Afro-Indian relations after the Bandung moment. Chanakya Sen was the pseudonym for Bhabani Sen Gupta, a prominent Indian political thinker and commentator in the latter half of the twentieth century. Author of many books published during the Cold War about India’s foreign policy concerning the USSR, China, as well as other Third World countries, Sen Gupta certainly brings his political knowledge and opinions to *The Morning After* as a literary text – particularly, his pro-Maoist Communist leanings.¹²⁹ Set after the call for solidarity and mutual development at Bandung, *The Morning After* brings the reality of this ideal into critical focus through the stories of two African students in India. The Bandung Conference revealed Indian Prime Minister Nehru’s desire not only to make India developed like the West, but also to help countries lower than itself on the ladder of development. Historian David C. Engerman characterizes India’s focus on economic development under Nehru as being concerned only with “a significant degree of industrialization”; political alignment with either America or the USSR did not matter to Nehru.¹³⁰ Despite numerous attempts from the United States to offer aid to India, the Nehruvian

¹²⁹ Nonfiction works by Sen Gupta include: *Soviet-Asian Relations in the 1970s and Beyond: An Interceptional Study* (New York: Praeger, 1976); *The Afghan Syndrome: How to Live with Soviet Power* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1982); *China Looks at the World* (Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1999); *The Gorbachev Factor in World Affairs: An Indian Interpretation* (Delhi: B.R. Pub. Corp., 1989).

¹³⁰ David C. Engerman, “West Meets East: The Center for International Studies and Indian Economic Development,” in *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, ed. David C. Engerman, Nils Gilman, Mark H. Haefele, and Michael E. Latham (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 200.

government had independent approaches to modernization, looking to the West yet borrowing from the USSR's model of planning, "using economics to evade politics."¹³¹

India's historical connection with Africa, and its shared British colonial past with some African countries, made Africa the primary target for India's development aid. Antoinette Burton contends that "one of the tasks of the Nehruvian state was to establish a place for India not simply between two superpowers, but in relationship to the whole of the African continent itself."¹³² The mindset of India-over-Africa at this time, according to Burton, was a legacy of the "superstructures of intracolonial interdependence that the British empire had created, and from which India was poised to create a new postcolonial empire," a vision of power over the also-colonized Other, an "India-centered world order."¹³³ Analyzing the racial dynamics in *Morning After*, Auritro Majumder points out that the text contains evidence of how this imagined brown-over-black hierarchy is established on a human level, in interactions between Africans in India and Indians themselves.¹³⁴ The two African students in *The Morning After*, Solomon Kuchiro and Peter Kabaku, came to India to gain an education as part of a development project by the Nehruvian government, designed to train intellectuals that would help Africa develop. In this section I focus particularly on the Kenyan student, Peter Kabaku, who is a Mau-Mau leader hoping to "learn the Indian experience of non-violence" but in his two years in India has not quite experienced it as a black African. Unlike the younger Solomon, who experiences racial bias in the home of a high Indian official, with the entire household suspecting him of seducing their

¹³¹ Engerman, 203.

¹³² Burton, 9.

¹³³ Burton, 9.

¹³⁴ Auritro Majumder, "The Poetics and Politics of Blackness: Literature as a Site of Transnational Contestation in Chanakya Sen's *The Morning After* and Utpal Dutt's *The Rights of Man*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50, no. 4 (2014), 426.

young daughter, Peter's experience of racist nationalism in India is seen in an even more personal sphere, through his sexual encounters with an Indian woman. As I will show, the text's depiction of these interracial intimacies does not simply criticize the hypocrisy of South-South solidarity that refuses to acknowledge the ongoing legacy of colonial racism. The problem with Peter's sexual encounter with the Indian woman is not just a problem of race, but a problem of development – in which Peter attempts to reach across the development ladder to the more developed. Viewed from Peter's perspective, that of the subject made underdeveloped, this scene of interracial intimacy exposes the violent and dehumanizing nature of a linear, hierarchical model of progress.

Having witnessed the violence of the Mau-Mau revolution in Kenya, Peter Kabaku has lost faith in bloodshed; India's appeal to him lies in the Gandhian ideal of non-violence. His hope in India became squandered quite early after his arrival, when he realized that "Indians generally regard Africa as one country and are quite unable to distinguish between African nationalities. If you had black skin, kinky hair, and so on, you were an African, and in private conversation between Indians, a Negro from Africa."¹³⁵ This is how Peter first learns of the Indians' racial bias against Africans, to which he comes to learn to adapt. "India was so keen to teach," he finds, but it also breeds doubt. Peter's initial optimism as a young leader wanting to learn for his country is gradually diminished. Burton reads Peter's story in India as a "postcolonial bildungsroman," which she explains to be "a novel of Indian national development not simply built on presumptions about African underdevelopment but rooted in anxieties about the interracial intimacies that Afro-Asian solidarities in practice may reveal."¹³⁶ As with many

¹³⁵ Chanakya Sen, *The Morning After: A Non-Novel* (Calcutta: Academic Publishers, 1973), 10.

¹³⁶ Burton, 90.

interpretations of the *Bildungsroman*, the growth of the nation is embodied by the growth of the subject, which is why India's national development might be ridden with anxieties over the racial mixing of Africans and Indians. However, with Peter Kabaku's story in particular, the anxieties over interracial intimacies come not only from Indians, but plague Peter himself. Having internalized racialized differences and Indians' patronizing attitude towards himself, Peter's education in this novel is suspended, fractured; his growth as an individual, and any hope for development for his home country, are similarly bleak. This sense of self-hatred in Peter, created by India's developmentalist attitude, is conveyed most clearly through a scene of interracial sex between him and an unnamed Indian woman. If we are to consider this text as a *Bildungsroman* not for India, but for Africa through Peter Kabaku, the text becomes a tale of Africa's inability to reach "development" within the developmental hierarchy that has built in systems of economic oppression to maintain itself.

The text's way of framing this scene of intimacy, and Peter's interactions in general with this woman, is remarkably reminiscent of *Season of Migration to the North*: Peter briefly wants to kill her, and in thinking back, he muses, "In a way she was dead when she came to him one evening..."¹³⁷ Peter's description of the woman can be read as objectifying: "even in her clothes she looked naked [...] she was a tongue of blazing lava."¹³⁸ Peter's and the woman's courtship are described in similar ways to that of Mustafa Sa'eed and his English conquests, especially Jean Morris; both courtships are a back-and-forth process, unclear as to "who seduced whom," with the inevitable outcome of a sexual relationship. In making note of the woman's "light-brown, creamy, slender, taunting" form, Peter reveals how conscious he is about their racial

¹³⁷ Sen, 108.

¹³⁸ Sen, 108.

differences. The interracial sex scene in *The Morning After* is also focalized through the black man's point of view; Peter feels like he is made whole by the act of "taking" the woman. "For once in his lifetime Peter did not feel that his head was a separate attachment to his body," implying the fracturedness of Peter's selfhood as a Kenyan growing up in a country torn by colonial violence, and then as a black African in India which looks down on him by the color of his skin.¹³⁹ Somehow this Indian woman, almost a symbol of development and Afro-Asian solidarity, is "entirely different from all the women he had known":

Sometimes she would subside into non-existence, into a dummy covered in rich clothes, into a limpid state of vagueness that Peter could neither penetrate nor get rid of. Sometimes she would be burningly, devastatingly present and alive, sucking into the womb of her body the last ounce of Peter's manhood, and leaving him prostrate, empty, void of all sense and sensibility.¹⁴⁰

To read this woman's body as a representation for Indian development is certainly dehumanizing. But such is the meaning that Peter's focalization provides: she is just a body on which Peter could project his mental and sexual frustrations about his failure to become the developed subject he expected to be in India. The vagueness of the woman's identity, the dreamlike haziness in which she materializes to Peter, speaks to how abstract and impossible the Indian model of development is to him.

If the fear of interracial desire during colonial times, similar to the Indian anxieties about Afro-Indian intimacies, has to do with "tainting" the superior race's superiority by the mixing of blood, which could make the superior race less 'civilized,' *The Morning After's* description of Peter's intimacy with the Indian woman subverts this. "She made him naked too," "took off his mask" of a man trying to be fit into a certain model of the 'civilized.' The act of interracial sex

¹³⁹ Sen, 109.

¹⁴⁰ Sen, 109.

brings Peter to his basest state: “he was no longer a man with a mission, but just a man, or better still, an aroused animal [...] each blinded by its own demand, fired by a passion that tore down everything known as civilization.”¹⁴¹ On the one hand this depiction assumes an ‘animal’ state within Peter, following the stereotype of Africans as barbaric or beastly. But on the other hand, the use of the phrase “everything known as civilization” points to a civilization that is artificial, and if civilization is constructed, the idea of baseness as its opposite is a construct as well. Perhaps this ripping off of the mask is a good thing, but upon the ending of that passion, Peter is left “dissembled, shattered,” with the ruins of his mask and his mission alike. Thus development and modernity continue to be questioned and challenged within this text; Peter’s complicated relationship with the “animal” side of his own self is a terrible reckoning. Burton’s phrase “postcolonial modernity” is a useful concept here: Peter Kabaku in India is operating within a modernity dictated by the West yet enacted by the postcolonial conditions in which race, economy, and knowledge are equally unstable.¹⁴² The promising model of development that India introduces is yet to be met by India themselves, and the call for Afro-Indian solidarity is suspended within the linear rhetoric of development that ultimately cannot be fulfilled.

In the next section, *Gifts* takes up the question of inter-developmental intimacy when race seems not to be part of the equation. Invoking formal characteristics that were previously addressed in this thesis with *Our Sister Killjoy* and *The Morning After*, I analyze textual interruptions in *Gifts* as the novel’s way of resisting narrative development as well as critiquing development aid. The developed-developing sexual intimacies at the heart of this novel reveal yet more complicated gendered critiques of the discourse of development.

¹⁴¹ Sen, 109.

¹⁴² Burton, 112.

GIFTS, EDUCATION, AND INTER-DEVELOPMENTAL INTIMACIES

In Nuruddin Farah's 1992 novel *Gifts*, the spirit of development lurks behind the act of giving: from something as small as car rides in transport-lacking Mogadiscio to development donations in the form of butter and milk from European countries to the Somalian government. The conflicts of gift-giving haunt the characters as well as the text, laying out the hypocrisies of development aid and development itself. Much scholarship on *Gifts* focuses on untangling the text's references to *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss and drawing parallels between gift-giving in Mauss's formulation and development aid.¹⁴³ While scholars are right to focus on the analogy of the gift and different ways to understand it, as Farah especially acknowledges Mauss at the beginning of the novel, they tend to focus only on the form of "gift" as aid from more developed countries to the Third World. The "gifts" concerning knowledge – who is receiving knowledge, why, and how – are those that go unquestioned and need interrogation in *Gifts*, especially with the two main characters: Duniya and Bosaaso, whose narrative of falling in love frames the novel itself, but whose characterizations raise questions about their roles as the "developed" and the "developing." I investigate how Duniya and Bosaaso, both African subjects, are respectively produced as developing and developed by the systems of knowledge surrounding them. Their relationship provides an interesting dimension to thinking about subject formation by development, as they are African subjects who are given these opposite roles and brought against each other. The intimacies Duniya and Bosaaso have with each other seem fundamental to the novel, yet reveal the problems thereof as a relationship that crosses registers of the ladder of

¹⁴³ See Francis Ngaboh-Smart, "Dimensions of Gift Giving in Nuruddin Farah's 'Gifts'," *Research in African Literatures* 27, no. 4 (1996); Tim Woods, "Giving and Receiving: Nuruddin Farah's *Gifts*, or, the Postcolonial Logic of Third World Aid," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38, no. 1 (2003).

development, between Bosaaso as an educated, developed subject and Duniya as his learning, developing counterpart.

Why development? It emerges as a major theme for *Gifts*, not because characters take it as a plot point, but because of its appearance beyond the narrative. While the novel does seem to build toward a happy resolution, in which Duniya and Bosaaso end up together, the novel's narrative arc is nonetheless constantly disrupted by the integration of other genres within the text: news snippets on development projects from Mogadiscio, New York, Brussels, etc. and magazine articles by Taariq, Duniya's former husband, printed in full within the novel. The first style of interruption takes the form of newspaper excerpts included at the end of many of the chapters. The first chapter, for example, is bookended by a newspaper snippet on the call for European aid from the Somalian government, in which the authority for giving is also placed with the Western powers and the UN, to "consider what assistance their governments can offer Somalia to cope with the disaster," citing one UN senior official that "efforts to fight the plague throughout Africa had cost at least \$100 million and that additional funds of over \$145 million will be needed in the coming year."¹⁴⁴ On one level, this small passage may be considered to be portraying the large extent of the famine in Somalia, but the language of grant being "promised by the governments of the USA and the Netherlands," of assistance on "offer," and the numbers cited by the UN official all point to a rhetoric of an underdeveloped, suffering nation having to await the developed's consideration of their needs.

The newspaper excerpts and Taariq's articles serve different purposes: while the former are short and provide only a small, supposedly objective look into the complications of development aid, the latter provide opinions from a Somalian person directly witnessing the

¹⁴⁴ Nuruddin Farah, *Gifts* (London: Serif Books, 1993), 7.

effects of development ‘gifts’ in his country. Presented as Duniya’s reading, both of these newspaper articles can be considered “mirror-texts” for the novel, following Mieke Bal’s formulation of the embedded text in *Narratology*.¹⁴⁵ They are separate from the storyline but work independently to build on the novel’s themes related to development aid and gift-giving. The first article, “The Story of a Cow,” takes the form of a fable on two farmers’s actions towards each other in the moment of the “worst famine in the Horn of Africa this century,” a clear reference to the 1974 Ethiopian famine, with mentions of a “UNICEF-organized feeding place.”¹⁴⁶ Seemingly unrelated to the rest of the text, this story’s depiction of the selfless sacrifice of one farmer, who was blessed with fortune in hardship, for another’s well-being reflects the Somali proverb mentioned earlier in the text by Bosaaso and his late wife, Yussur. The proverb, “*Qeebiyaa qada*,” translated by Bosaaso as “He who distributes the offerings of fortune receives little as his personal share,” represents the Somali spirit of giving, which counters the Western aid being given to them with the expectation of payment and gratitude.¹⁴⁷ Taariq’s second article, “Giving and Receiving: The Notion of Donations,” delivers a frank critique of how Africa’s famine and suffering have come to be exploited by the developed world in the way that “charity” or aid is given to Africa: “No doubt, television is a personality creator, and donors have their smiling pictures taken, alternating with scenes of Ethiopian skeletons. For the first time Africa has been given prime time TV coverage, but alas, Africa is speechless, and hungry.”¹⁴⁸ Highlighting the difference between the traditional Somali notion of giving, their communal understanding of food and subsistence, and the impersonal “gifts” bestowed by the

¹⁴⁵ Mieke Bal, *Narratology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 58.

¹⁴⁶ Farah, 54-55.

¹⁴⁷ Farah, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Farah, 197.

developed, this article encapsulates the collective purpose of the newspaper excerpts scattered in the text. These embedded texts “[contain] a suggestion for how the text should be read,” signaling to the reader the novel’s critique of development aid that serves the developed ‘giver’ more than the recipient.¹⁴⁹ Even more, the inclusion of nonfiction genres in the novel creates a staggered effect to the progress of the story, while drawing a contrast between the official accounts of development, usually laid out in policy and resolutions, and the common people’s experience of it in underdeveloped countries.

The dichotomy of developed-underdeveloped within the roles of giver-receiver comes to be elucidated and embodied in the two main characters, Bosaaso and Duniya. Bosaaso, after receiving a PhD in economics in America, returned to Somalia to “donate his services to the government and people of his country, accepting no payment, only an apartment, conveniently located and modestly furnished,” working for the Ministry of Economic Planning.¹⁵⁰ His American education and subsequent government job make him the epitome of the developed. Bosaaso’s figuring as the developed gift-giver is apparent in his reply to Duniya’s pain after the death of a child they had found and adopted. Duniya would “stare for an endless number of minutes at the negatives of the X-rays, fascinated, dreamy-looking, her fingers absently tracing the multi-wrinkled reproductions, thinking (how weird!) of a dead foetus preserved in a jar filled with clear vinegar,” lose her appetite, and Bosaaso’s way of empathizing with her pain is to “cite as an example the weeks following Yussur’s and his son’s tragic deaths when he gave up smoking,” and recall “how empty he had felt as soon as he finished defending his PhD thesis.”¹⁵¹ Such responses to Duniya’s own pain of losing a child that she was beginning to raise as her own

¹⁴⁹ Bal, 59.

¹⁵⁰ Farah, 15.

¹⁵¹ Farah, 132.

show Bosaaso's detachment from her emotional state, from his privileged position as a well-to-do, foreign-educated man in Somali society at the time. Placed alongside Duniya, a middle-class Somali nurse who does not own a car, and the highly detailed and graphic descriptions of her imaginings after the child's death, the emptiness he had felt in giving up smoking for a week and especially after finishing his American PhD is fundamentally and almost comically distant from the nature of her pain.

By the end of the novel, Bosaaso is explicitly equated with a Western force that has given aid to underdeveloped countries, as Duniya observes him rejecting the request for more money from his first wife's sister, Waaberi:

This wasn't a story of equals having a show-down, thought Duniya; not a Duniya confronting the cruelty of a half-brother; or a Yussur having an all-out fight with her mother. This was more like a donor European or American government having a 'frank talk' (the all-purpose phrase which would appear in the official communiqué) with an African country's representatives, in which the latter were told that they were being immodest in the number of Mercedes and similar extravagances and in the show-pieces they displayed to the rest of the world.¹⁵²

The disparity between Bosaaso, the American-educated Somali man, the aid-giving force, who had given money to Waaberi and her and Yussur's mother even after Yussur's death, and Waaberi, the aid receiver entirely dependent on him, is striking: this is not "a story of equals." A shade of complex critique is added here as Waaberi herself is compared to the representatives of African governments who live in luxury with aid money, which is supposed to go to help the poor and suffering in their countries. The text is highly aware of such issues, as well as of "the all-purpose phrase" "the official communiqué," the publicized version of the development aid narrative and its underlying stories of corruption. Bosaaso is set up as a developed giver, with an education that allows him the money and a detached mindset from others in the developing

¹⁵² Farah, 220.

community around him, and he remains a giver. Furthermore, the narrative shows him as already-developed, with no path or need for growth or improvement in behavior or thinking, secure in his positioning until he is directly compared to the Western donors of which the novel is highly skeptical.

Gifts differs from *Our Sister Killjoy* in that it portrays a postcolonial African character that is a developed subject, not deficit or in need of development. This developed subject occupies his own space between the developed Europeans and the underdeveloped Africans, and in his existence conveys the distance between these two worlds. If Bosaaso is created as developed, Duniya is his developing counterpart; the arc of the novel sees her learning new skills, such as driving and swimming, while Bosaaso continues to assert himself as a giver figure in his involvement with her ‘education.’ He teaches her to drive himself, and pays for her to get swimming lessons. Duniya, always cautious about receiving gifts and favors from others, questions the nature of accepting his help: “Was this going to be another nail hammered into the coffin of her dependence on him? Or was theirs simply another clichéd relationship, so to speak, in which women were the providers of food, shelter, peace at home and good company in exchange for the man’s offer of upward mobility, security and cash.”¹⁵³ In language that recalls the notion of uniqueness surrounding the educated African subject in *Our Sister Killjoy*, the text calls Duniya “a success story” when she manages to learn how to swim, adapting the language of development projects for personal achievement.¹⁵⁴ In the end, however, she accepts the help as well as Bosaaso’s love, establishing a relationship between the developed and the developing laced with gendered connotations that the text does not really question. Even as *Gifts* criticizes

¹⁵³ Farah, 153.

¹⁵⁴ Farah, 186.

development and the hypocrisy of aid in its language, its treatment of characters does not necessarily convey the same critique. Duniya and Bosaaso are both created as subjects of the mindset of development, and accept their subjection when it benefits them.

With the two main characters established as such in the distinct roles of the developed and developing, the scene of their sexual intimacy captures what I call an “inter-developmental” relationship not dissimilar to the interracial interactions described in the previous sections of the thesis. This scene, like those from *Season*, *Killjoy*, and *Morning After*, is afforded a sense of narrative importance; for *Gifts* it is especially pivotal because the romantic relationship between Duniya and Bosaaso underlies the plot. However, several aspects distinguish the scene of intimacy in *Gifts*, which does not carry questions of race because Duniya and Bosaaso are both Somali, from its interracial counterparts in the other three texts. While this scene also crosses developmental registers, it depicts a consensual, joyful “love-making,” with the phrase “love-making” being used over and over again. Like the scenes between Mustafa and Jean Morris, Sissie and Marija, and Peter Kabaku and the unnamed Indian woman, it is written from the perspective of the underdeveloped character, Duniya; however, it is neither tortured, violent, nor alienating. Duniya and Bosaaso’s love-making is framed with a feeling of rightness, of power for Duniya – it is her decision to “give herself to him, a wish that had taken days to mature.”¹⁵⁵ It is this sense of individual agency afforded to the underdeveloped characters that distinguishes *Gifts* most clearly from the interracial sexual scenes of the other novels. The sexualized murder in *Season of Migration to the North*, the queer encounter of *Our Sister Killjoy*, and the dehumanizing sexual violence of *The Morning After* are wrought with inevitability; they portray sex and pleasure between the parties involved as dissociative, something the characters seem

¹⁵⁵ Farah, 202.

unable to resist or stop by their own will. The love-making scene in *Gifts*, however, is depicted with Duniya's choice and decision every step of the way. After reaching Bosaaso's big house, which has a night watchman and is better equipped than most places in the city, she chooses not to have electricity turned on just for them while "the rest of the district has no light."¹⁵⁶ If the encounter between Sissie and Marija in *Killjoy* is framed as stepping into darkness, into a "primeval cave," the half-dark setting of Duniya and Bosaaso's embrace is by Duniya's own choice. The scene plays with light and dark, as Duniya's shadow is severed into two halves in the doorway, as she "[steps] on the tail of her own shadow, as if it were a doormat on which she was meant to wipe her shoes clean."¹⁵⁷ If Duniya had any reservations about pursuing her relationship with Bosaaso, those reservations are materialized in that severed shadow, split between the moonlight and the darkness in the house; by stepping onto the shadow "as if it were a doormat" she has made her decision to disregard any fears of being with this rich, educated, more developed man.

The intimate acts themselves are laden with euphemisms; Duniya's body is compared to "a door whose combination locks required the performance of a certain number of feats, before being allowed in," yet paradoxically, she is the one with the agency to allow Bosaaso in, "only when he proved himself to be a charmer."¹⁵⁸ The ideal character of their union includes its focus on pleasure and getting to know each other better; the union does not carry any expectation of children, a function of the female body that Duniya knows most intimately as a midwife and a mother of two children. Furthermore, they are both thinking constantly throughout the act, focused not just on each other but also on how the lover relates to things beyond that room. Even

¹⁵⁶ Farah, 203.

¹⁵⁷ Farah, 203.

¹⁵⁸ Farah, 206.

these imaginings during love-making reveal Bosaaso's and Duniya's opposite ways of thinking. While he sees her pleasure in abstract, intellectual terms, "light as that proverbial prophet's chariot, the prophet whom some call Ilyaas, some Elijah, some Idris, and whom others describe as descending from Haruun, the brother of Moses; this most revered miracle-maker of a prophet, whom Muslims believe to be Khadr," she notes the material aspects of his body, the marks made by the trouser belt, the "far too many" burns and scars.¹⁵⁹ In the end, however, they still reach mutual completion, with their feelings affirmed. This scene of intimacy, which brings together the two sides of developmental modernity as established in the text, acknowledges the contrast between Duniya and Bosaaso, yet serves as proof that such contrast does not render them incompatible or make their relationship impossibly difficult. Even as *Gifts* emphasizes critique of development aid and its effect upon Somalia, it opens up a positive outlook for the country by evoking an idealistic romance traversing registers of development. In so doing it overlooks the gendered implications of who should receive help and "gifts," who is to be educated and by whom, what kind of knowledge is worth learning. Thus, issues of subject formation under the discourse of development still need to be questioned in this novel, despite its desire to idealize such subjections.

¹⁵⁹ Farah, 207-208.

CONCLUSION

(DE)CONSTRUCTING THE FICTION OF DEVELOPMENT

“What’s school?,” asked a young Mustafa Sa’eed at the beginning of his life story in *Season of Migration to the North*.¹⁶⁰ Getting to go to school marks a turning point for Mustafa as well as Bosaaso, who in *Gifts* also confides in Duniya about his upbringing. Born some 50 years apart in novels written some 30 years apart, Mustafa and Bosaaso are both provided spaces to describe the boys they once were, raised without fathers and by strong mothers. And both characters, as I have described in the previous sections of the thesis, go on to obtain a Western education, earning advanced degrees from England and the United States respectively. The presence of such life narratives in novels that actually don’t focus on these characters raises questions on what these narratives of growth convey. In a classic critical volume on the Arabic novel, Roger Allen characterizes *Season* as “a novel of upbringing or *Bildungsroman*” in its portrayal of cultures in contact:

particularly with the confrontation between traditional and modern values when Middle Eastern characters spend some time in the West as part of their education – a novel of upbringing or *Bildungsroman*, to use the German term, and then return to their homeland to face and cope with the differences that inevitably impinge upon their life thereafter.¹⁶¹

As novels that address schooling, education, and the influence of knowledge upon character formation, these texts’ association of with the form of the *Bildungsroman* may seem obvious. Calling *The Morning After* a “postcolonial bildungsroman,” Antoinette Burton proposes an alternative to the classic European *Bildungsroman* by taking into account the text’s postcolonial setting, which would lead to a more complicated understanding of the processes by which the

¹⁶⁰ Salih, 19.

¹⁶¹ Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: An Historical and Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 159-160.

text approaches characters' education and possibility of growth. To identify a text as a *Bildungsroman*, a novel of education or of development, whether in the conventional sense or a postcolonial 'version' of it, means to see it as containing a trajectory of growth. The traditional *Bildungsroman* in European novels, according to Franco Moretti, is the "symbolic form of modernity"; its focus on youth represents modernity as "a world that seeks its meaning in the future rather than in the past."¹⁶² Moretti describes the *Bildungsroman* as "intrinsically contradictory" because not only does it carry a preoccupation with the future, it is also limited, curbing youth's inherent "dynamism" by assigning certain ways in which this growth toward the future is going to take shape.¹⁶³ The novel of upbringing, of education, popular as it is, "has portrayed and promoted modern socialization," building upon an internal self and this self's integration into adult society.¹⁶⁴ In other words, the *Bildungsroman* is meant to reveal a process of subject formation – the coming-of-age, coming-into-knowing of a subject.

Connecting the rhetoric of human rights law and the form of the *Bildungsroman*, Joseph Slaughter articulates one aspect of the *Bildungsroman* as "personalizing" modernization. To perpetuate the idea of human rights as "a plot for 'the modernizing of the world'," early drafters of this rhetoric used terms that evoked developmentalist Cold War conflicts, describing human rights as "the moral advantage that 'Western, Christian civilization' has over the material, developmental promises of communism in a Manichean struggle for the hearts and minds of the 'underdeveloped' Third World."¹⁶⁵ Slaughter makes the important point that "the plots to

¹⁶² Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, new edition, trans. Albert Sbragia (London and New York: Verso, 2000), 5. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶³ Moretti, 6. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁴ Moretti, 10.

¹⁶⁵ Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 107.

modernize the world and the individual are interconnected,” which essentially aligns the basic plot of the *Bildungsroman*, the progress of an individual, with the supposed progress of the “world” or more specifically the society of which this individual is a part. While critical of Frederic Jameson’s claim for the “national allegory” that automatically and necessarily make all Third World texts *Bildungsromane*, “*the story of the private individual destiny [that] is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society,*” Slaughter acknowledges the “ethno-nationalist logic of *Bildung* itself,” by which the idea of *Bildung* was conceived as integrally connected to the construction of German national value and culture in the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁶ Slaughter does not place an emphasis on Third World texts in this writing; however, his insights on the connection between human personal development and national modernization could relate to texts such as *Season*, *Killjoy*, *Morning After*, and *Gifts* in interesting ways, if we were to consider them as *Bildungsromane*, or female *Bildungsromane* (for *Killjoy* and *Gifts*), or postcolonial *Bildungsromane*, as Burton mentions in her analysis of *The Morning After*. This means that the education and growth of the African subject in the novels by their developed education can or should be linked to the development of their country at that moment. However, there are several ways in which such associations between personal growth and national development in these texts are contested, which indeed resists the identification of them as containing any form of *Bildung* at all.

As Moretti points out, the *Bildungsroman* operates as formation of a subject, usually understood as a self-determining subject with agency over their own actions after being fully formed. However, I see subject formation as manifesting in the opposite meaning of subjectivity

¹⁶⁶ Frederic Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text* 15, no. 3 (1986), 69, quoted in Slaughter, 113. Emphasis is Slaughter’s.

in the four primary texts of this thesis; I argue that development-driven overseas education creates the individual as subject *to* development as a form of power. In the essay “The Subject and Power,” Michel Foucault connects the formation of the subject to the possibility of investigating power by looking at the forms of resistance to power. He uses examples of resistance movements to pinpoint the commonalities they share in figuring the kind of power they are resisting against – not what it *is*, but what it *does*:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word “subject”: subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.¹⁶⁷

Through resistance, Foucault identifies power as integrally linked to subject formation: the subject is constructed not through any abstract process but in everyday life, by being made individual but not having any freedom to decide or change the nature of this individuality. This is what Foucault calls the “government of individualization.”¹⁶⁸ Knowledge is also an important part of this construction of power, as Foucault points out that resistance movements oppose “the privileges of knowledge” – that is, aspects of knowledge that uphold a certain meaning of power with set ideas of competence and qualification – as well as the kinds of knowledge about people imposed by power. This twofold relationship between knowledge and power enables subject formation: it works as an individualizing force that creates the individual subject, and a totalizing process that gives form to a space for this subject.

¹⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1982), 781.

¹⁶⁸ Foucault, 781.

Foucault specifically links this general figuring of power to the political form of state power, which is in turn connected to what he calls the “old pastoral power” in Christian institutions. This old pastoral power governs the individual by promising them salvation in the next life, and by getting into the inner workings of their thoughts and desires – as such, it is fundamentally an individualizing force.¹⁶⁹ State power, according to Foucault, develops a “modern matrix” of this individualizing power, drawing individuals into a “set of specific patterns” that controls them.¹⁷⁰ The first and most significant way in which the new pastoral power differs is that it is no longer concerned with salvation for the next life, but rather in this one: “the word ‘salvation’ takes on different meanings: health, well-being (that is, sufficient wealth, standard of living), security, protection against accidents.”¹⁷¹ As a result, Foucault argues that the system of this new pastoral power is not limited to the church, as the old pastoral power was, but extends to other institutions around the individual to ensure this promise of contemporaneous well-being. The growth of this system of power “focused the development of knowledge of man around two roles: one, globalizing and quantitative, concerning the population; the other, analytical, concerning the individual,” supplanting the subject into a network of connections to solidify their subjecthood.¹⁷²

Through analyses of the personal relationships between characters, and the relationships of those characters to knowledge, education, and development in *Season of Migration to the North*, *Our Sister Killjoy*, *The Morning After*, and *Gifts*, I have demonstrated how development is both an individualizing and totalizing force, simultaneously creating the figure of a “developed”

¹⁶⁹ Foucault, 783.

¹⁷⁰ Foucault, 783.

¹⁷¹ Foucault, 784.

¹⁷² Foucault, 784.

subject and the “underdeveloped” space around that subject. On the thematic level, this process is facilitated, I argue, through education; the African subject that receives an education abroad is constructed as singular and unique, a “success story,” yet at the same time is meant to represent their society to the rest of the world, especially to the developed. Created by development, the supposedly “developed” African subject is still prosecuted by it, by means of these individualizing and totalizing expectations – if they fall short of either process, they become a failure and fulfill the established knowledge of their “underdeveloped” origin. Like the new pastoral power of the state, development operates upon the promise of a better way of living for the community, which is manifested in the economic aid and material conditions visible in the texts. On the formal level, the texts’ use of frame narrative, compressed and non-linear temporality, and paratactic bricolage of genres constructs a hybrid postcolonial consciousness that is aware of its own limitations in its physical conditions. This consciousness understands its own embeddedness in the mindset of development, yet in its unstable position between the developed and underdeveloped worlds, strives for a way of resisting the force of development. Towards this meaning, the formal elements operate in the novels differently; I dwell on the different kinds of postcolonial subjects represented in each text, to show how “the African subject” is constructed as static, yet in truth differentiated. Even as the promise of modernization, of development on an economic and social level, is still materializing, the individual characters’ encounter with modernity, as seen through scenes of interracial intimacies, are tormented, alienating, dehumanizing. This disjunction between subject formation and national development resists the associations of these texts with the form or message of the *Bildungsroman*.

How could we characterize a “fiction of development,” that is, a text that addresses the discourse of development in our contemporary understanding of economic and technological

advancement? It is not within the scope of this thesis to offer a concrete blueprint for such a text, but the analyses throughout the thesis have opened up a few suggestions. The first is a shift of focus to postcolonial literatures of the Global South, including texts that have rarely been read and analyzed. Such literatures, even when written in a language of the majority as English, offer perspectives of the subjects created as ‘underdeveloped’ that are unable to be found elsewhere. As I have shown in formal discussions of *Season of Migration to the North* and *Our Sister Killjoy*, non-Western literatures incorporate forms and languages unfamiliar to the Western novel, thereby subverting assumptions of narrative, of character development, of thematic progress that have often been made too quickly for any text that is supposed to critique development. Furthermore, I would suggest resisting associations of such texts to Western texts, whether through a kind of *Bildungsroman* or Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. To think about texts that address the Western education of postcolonial subjects in the “center” as derivatives of *Heart of Darkness* can be a reductive way of engaging with them. The Saidian “voyage in,” as I show, is not just a literary move based on a Western text, but a historical reality facilitated by a new form of imperial influence: development. Historicizing the postcolonial novel about education in the development discourse, and reading them alongside similar postcolonial texts of their own moment, are to me a more productive way of truly “provincializing Europe.”

Why does a “fiction of development” matter? This thesis has attempted to convey the importance of literary narratives in constructing a more complete picture of development, beyond its established, quantitative rationale and methods located in the space of the developed. Development, as a discourse with ongoing, global engagement, also pushes postcolonial literary studies outside of its comfort zone of non-material, discursive concern. To borrow the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, it is simply not enough to leave the “responsibility” to right the

wrongs of poverty, of underdevelopment, to a certain group who is assumed to be able to bear that responsibility; “righting wrongs” should be conducted from “below,” from the position of the subaltern.¹⁷³ The hegemony of development is such that the content of what the characters learn in the West does not actually matter, only the fact that it is ‘developed’ knowledge. This thesis’s primary texts, as “fictions of development,” are not concerned too much with the technical knowledge of the characters, but rather how their education has formed them as subject to the project of development. They enact an “uncoercive rearrangement of desires” that provides insights into subject formation as a product of power, without needing to succumb to the rhetoric of technical growth internal to the development process.¹⁷⁴ At the convergence of postcolonial studies, development, education, and literature are various possibilities for a better understanding of development in the Global South, of human interactions facilitated by globalization, and of world literature itself.

¹⁷³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Righting Wrongs,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 103, no. 2–3 (2004), 538.

¹⁷⁴ Spivak, 526.

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