

**Enas Abdelwahab**

# Apartheid in South Africa. From Oppression to Survival

Oppression, Resistance and Political Satire as Post-colonial Features in Peter Horn`s Poetry

**Thesis (M.A.)**

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Damietta University

Faculty of Arts

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**Oppression, Resistance and Political Satire as Post-colonial Features in Peter Horn`s Poetry**

An M.A. Thesis Submitted to the Department of English  
Language and Literature, Faculty of Arts

By

**Enas Abdallah Abdelwahab Abdelkader**

**2019**

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## **Abstract**

The study concentrates on the theory of postcolonialism and its main features. It tackles three features: oppression, resistance and political satire. These features are reflected in the poetry of Peter Horn. His poems portray the misery of the South African citizens during the apartheid regime.

Horn is a white poet who takes the side of the oppressed black majority. He expresses their suffering, and he pushes them to have the courage to resist the colonial oppression in order to lead a free and better life.

## List of Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
NP	National Party
PAC	Pan African Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SAIC	South African Indian Congress
UN	United Nations
VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie

## **Introduction**

## **Introduction**

The study aims at exploring three features of the theory of post-colonialism in the poetry of Peter Horn (1934- ) which are colonial oppression, political satire and resistance. In general, post-colonialism signifies a political, social and cultural reaction to a period of colonialism of a specific nation. It describes the major consequences of the imperial system, especially its oppression, exploitation, slavery and segregation.

After realizing the bad ills of colonialism, the colonizers' main purpose becomes very clear, as it is not for the good of the colonized nation. The true purpose of colonialism begins to be released, as it is not for spreading civilization and advanced life to the colonized people, but the true aim behind it is a disastrous one. Many thinkers have talked about the deep ills of colonialism and its harsh reality like Edward Said.

Said argues that the most remarkable result of the colonial policy is the division of the world. It divides it into the First World which has the imperialistic power and cultural supremacy, and the Third World that is uncivilized and needs to be controlled. As a result of that, it is very normal for the colonizers to deal with the colonized people as slaves and humiliate them. Racism also becomes the inevitable result of that unjust rule, and many people have no choice but to accept that.

Many countries in the world have been affected by colonialism and its dire consequences. One of these countries was South Africa, as it suffered from the imperial domination implemented by its government. The influence of the authoritarian system in South Africa, presented in the apartheid system, had a very bad impact on its society. Suffering in this country started when it was colonized by Dutch settlers who made a

unique and isolated community for them inside the South African nation. They had already formed the concept of diaspora once they chose to leave their homelands and come to another land to make a sort of racial discrimination followed by the oppression implemented by the English colonialism. The post-colonial era took its place in South Africa after the departure of the British colonialism and the inheritance of segregation still has its clear impacts. The post-colonial era in this country was not so different from the colonial one, as both of them had the same discriminatory policies and even the Dutch settlers doubled their oppression by the authorization of the English colonizers.

The theory of post-colonialism and its features have affected literature clearly. Many dramatists, novelists and even poets have reflected on the political situation in their country. The art of poetry is like a mirror which shows the deep ills of colonialism; Horn's poetry is a typical example of that. Horn manages to portray the tyrant system in South Africa in many of his poems.

Horn is a South African poet who is deeply influenced by the apartheid regime. He was born in Teplice Czechoslovakia (currently in the Czech Republic) on December 7, 1934. After World War II, he had to immigrate from his homeland and settle with his parents first in Bavaria and later in Freiburg in Breisgau, where he completed his high school in 1954. He then moved with his parents to South Africa, where he studied at the University of the Witwatersrand and the College of Education (Johannesburg).

Although he was not South African by birth, he was always standing beside the oppressed party, and he devotes most of his poems to criticize the political conditions in South Africa and even mocking them. He calls for freedom and spreading the spirit of resistance through his poems.

Actually, the main concern of most of his poetic production is totally political. It talks about the disastrous consequences of colonialism in South Africa like injustice, slavery and humiliation. Horn has a belief that one of the functions of poetry is to teach people how to think and have such free self-determination. He intends to make his poetry a revolutionary one, as he wants to make a fair change for the sake of the oppressed people. He uses poetry as a tool to secure a better life dominated by justice.

The study is divided into four chapters followed by a conclusion. The first chapter “Theoretical and Historical Background” tackles a theoretical and historical background. It contains the scope of the study and its limitations. Also, it elaborates on the theory of postcolonialism in general and its outstanding features and terms. This chapter also contains the followed methodology that is extracted from Said’s perspectives about this theory. Then, it reflects the deep impact of post-colonialism on South Africa as a colony after two kinds of colonialism. This chapter further shows the effect of post-colonialism on the poetry of Horn. It reflects the consequences of post-colonialism on the political regime of South Africa presented in the ills of the apartheid system. Furthermore, it presents some biographical elements of Horn and how they affect him as a poet, and it will finally give some comments on his poetic style.

The second chapter “Diaspora and Colonial Oppression” handles the idea of diaspora and colonial oppression represented in the cruelty of the apartheid regime. Diaspora is one of the causes behind the movement of colonialism in South Africa. That phenomenon describes the case of a group of people who leave their own countries due to political, social or economic circumstances and immigrate to other countries. Actually, Horn had the same situation, and he was one of the European immigrants who

fled to South Africa after the consequences of World War II. He refused to take the role of the tyrant colonizer, preferred to be with the colonized people and called for their rights.

Many of his poems tackle the cruel policy of the colonizers. They reflect how enslavement and oppression are the main policy there. Horn shows, in most of his poems, how the colonizers considered themselves the owners of the country while the native people were their slaves. Oppression and injustice become the main tools to control everything in South Africa, as superiority is for Europeans in the first place, then come the other levels of society. Diaspora brought nothing but many ethnic problems and cultural clashes in the South African society, moreover, it caused an extended series of colonial oppression even after the departure of the British colonialism.

The third chapter “Post-colonialism and Political Satire” presents the connection between the theory of postcolonialism and the technique of political satire. Satire and irony are the most common techniques in Horn’s poetry. He uses them to describe the intensity of the political situation in South Africa. This style also explains the negative situation of the citizens towards the unjust government and its policy. Horn uses satire and irony to show the deep contrast between the miserable case of many classes in the South African society and their absent role to have a reaction against that. Also, he uses them to show the contradictory situation of the colonizers, as in spite of the amount of oppression, the colonizers expect complete obedience from the colonized, and this is the peak of irony. Horn wants to stress the catastrophic circumstances in a way that can arouse such a rebellious action to find a solution. He uses a big deal of his poetry to

mock the tyrant style of the government and its discriminatory practices against the poor classes. Because of the tough censorship over many of Horn's poems due to his constant criticism of the authority, he has chosen to use satire to make a sort of revolution inside minds in an indirect way. Many of his poems force people to think and contemplate the situation in order to rise up and play a positive role by resisting the apartheid regime.

The fourth chapter " Culture of Resistance" presents the mechanism of the resisting reaction to the chain of suffering and subjugation. This kind of culture can be briefly defined as a complete resistance and rejection of the colonizers' culture by searching for a way to rescue the native South African one. The difference in cultures between the colonized and the colonizers brought a sort of clash and struggle. Due to the supremacy of the colonizers, they had cultural domination over other races in all spheres. However, many classes in society resisted that domination and began to protest against it.

The resisting attitude is reflected in many of Horn's poems. He makes such a hard criticism of the political situation in South Africa, and he intends to spread that ideology of resistance to put an end to that tough domination. He believes that resistance would maintain the identity of the South African society and solve its crisis. He presents that attitude as it is like a light which should disperse the darkness of colonial oppression. He does that by arousing the rebellious feeling inside the oppressed people and force them to resist and oppose that imperialistic control over their life and culture

Horn divides his resisting poems to three types: The indirect ones that arouse the kept desires for change, the direct poems that give the plain declaration of revolution and then the poems that explore a new kind of resistance which is the dirty one.



Through mentioning the third type of resistance, Horn gives a hint about the feature of hybridity and its danger presented in the hypocritical and fragmented South African people. He calls for the application of communism with all its options to get out of this dilemma. He commemorates the freedom fighters who can adopt this resisting attitude and rescue the South African dignity.

The conclusion will entail a critical evaluation of the findings of the study.

## **Chapter One**

## **Chapter One: Theoretical and Historical Background**

This chapter explores the theoretical and historical background of the theory of postcolonialism. It also mentions some of its basic features that have contributed to supporting the authority of the imperialistic regimes in the colonized countries. It also reflects the perspectives of Said about the movement of colonialism and its sequences in the period of postcolonialism. It further introduces biographical elements about the poet Horn and how these elements affected his poetic production as an anti-apartheid poet.

Colonialism can be defined as a sort of exploitation and subjugation to a powerless nation implemented by an imperialistic country. There is a brief description of the case of suffering during colonialism. According to Catherine Lu:

Historical colonialism, of course, did fundamentally entail colonized states violating the self-determination of colonized peoples, through practices such as military conquest and political subjugation, enslavement and exploitation of subjugated populations, the annexation of territories, expropriation of property, and resource extraction. (262)

Through the period of colonialism, colonizers make a sort of distortion to the actual identity of the metropolitans. After military, political, economic and social domination, colonizers begin to practice their tyrant role against the colonized nation. The major policy is to humiliate and exploit the native people of the colonized lands. That entire amount of bondage and suffering creates a reaction, which is called post-colonialism.

Post-colonialism is a cultural, political, economic and social reaction after the process of colonialism. It illustrates the consequences of colonialism that are tough imperialism, racism, slavery, exploitation, and segregation. Kelly Harding and Jim Parsons believe that

Post-colonialism theory asks for justice: It seeks to speak to the vast and horrific social and psychological suffering, exploitation, violence and enslavement done to the powerless victims of colonization around the world. It challenges the superiority of the dominant Western perspective. (2)

The previous quotation shows the amount of suffering of the colonized nations during colonialism and even after its departure. The violent policies practiced by the colonizers against the colonized make them feel like slaves on their native land. The superiority is always for the colonizers and their policies. Just like what is declared by Paul Pierre: "a smug acceptance of here over there, after over before, us over you, along with the valorization of margin over center" (190). Pierre argues that the interests of the colonizers` come first. The ugly face of the colonizers is so clear in spite of their false attempts to persuade the colonized that the act of colonialism is for their modernity. The truth is about accomplishing greedy interests for the good of the colonizers by exploiting the colonized lands as well as their people.

During the process of colonization, colonizers are such cultural holders who afford their cruel policies in many different spheres. Geng Yang, Qixue Zhang and Qi Wang argue:

From the post-colonialist point of view, cultural colonization and cultural hegemony can invade into people`s "marrow", capture people

`s soul, assimilate people`s worldview, values, way of thinking, and lifestyle, and unnoticeably have the effect that politics and economics cannot have (284).

The previous passage illustrates another face of post-colonialism, which is the cultural one. The post-colonial theory figures out the relationship between the culture of the colonizers and that of the colonized. It studies the limitations of the difference between the powerful and the powerless. It also reflects the true aim behind the invasion of a country. It is about affording the colonizers` culture and the obedient people of the native land should accept that peacefully. The colonizers intend to impose their own culture and make it an actual tradition that should be completely followed by metropolitans. The native culture of the colonized people is ignored and underestimated by the colonizers. There is a new way of life that invades all its spheres. The most well-known justification for that hegemony is to improve the uncivilized nations and spread democracy, while the hidden purpose is disastrous and brings more amount of ravage. It reflects the actual meaning of tyranny.

The colonizers justify their existence that they will apply modernity on these uncivilized and poor nations. The claimed purpose is to build a kind of liberation from the restrictions of chaos and the barbaric life, so the role of the colonizers does not sound a harmful thing to be resisted. Unfortunately, the real target behind it is to spread exploitation with all its faces. Said talks about this in his book *Orientalism*:

Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy, and that it uses force only as a last resort. And, sadder still, there always is a chorus of