

COSMOPOLITANISM THROUGH INTERTEXTUAL DEVICES IN THE POSTMODERN BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the problem of cosmopolitanism in the postmodern biographical novel through the analysis of “The Moor’s Account” (2015) by Layla Lalami. The theoretical framework of the essay provides a definition of the term “cosmopolitanism” touching upon Stefano Evangelista’s (2021) observations on the globalization and diversity through putting into binary opposition the notions of nationalism and cosmopolitanism as well as Valentin Khalizev’s (2011) views on intertextuality. The essay concludes by highlighting the fact that, in spite of cosmopolitanism and globalization in the world process, postmodern biofiction allows writers to fuse versatile cultural values into one context and through this blend create the kaleidoscope of philosophies in the biographical novel. The most common form of reminiscence is quotation, accurate or imprecise; “quoted” or remaining implicit. Reminiscences can be included in works consciously or arise independently of the will of the author (“literary reminiscences”). A skillful reader can feel that subtle cultural features interconnected into one orbit/scope/frame of the literary text. Authors try to skim the cultural-aesthetic latitudes from different texts and develop their own unique text with emerging versatility.

KEYWORDS: *Cosmopolitanism, Postmodernism, Intertextuality, Reminiscences and Quotes.*

INTRODUCTION

“Cosmopolitanism as a liberal ideology that celebrates human diversity and as a social identity linked to worldliness; it investigates its effect on gender, ethics, and the emotions. It presents the literature of the fin de siècle as a dynamic space of exchange and mediation, and argues that our own approach to literary studies should become less national in focus.” [1,2,3]

Contemporary literature is characterized as a cosmopolitan, fragmentary, and eclectic, which combines diverse nations and ethnicities. The writers touch various themes and one work can include the glimpses from various cultures. A skillful reader can feel that subtle cultural features interconnected into one orbit/scope/frame of the literary text. Authors try to skim the cultural-aesthetic latitudes from different texts and develop their own unique text with emerging versatility. Technically they can be named as literary reminiscences or quotes from different literary texts hitched together to convey one central idea in the work. This process can be regarded as cosmopolitanism and contemporary reader strongly aware of globalization and

multiple viewpoints and mindsets tries to integrate all his experience to catch that subtle information to understand the message. [4,5]

Analysis: Layla Lalami’s novel “The Moor’s Account” (2015) can be a suitable example to demonstrate that literary cosmopolitanism through which she was able to draw a truthful biographical account of the first African-American who stepped on the shores of the American continent. Estebanico/Mustafa Al-Zamori is a truthful literary personage (who has his historical prototype) with national identity and who is described through techniques of cosmopolitanism.

	<i>Fragment from or recollection of other text</i>	<i>Type</i>
1	“The elders teach us: a living dog is better than a dead lion”	Ecclesiastes Hebrew and Christian religious book (quote)
2	The elders teach us: let my friends remember me; let all others forget about me. = “If you remember me, then I don't care if everyone else forgets.” - Haruki Murakami, “Kafka on the Shore”	Japanese writer Haruki Murakami (reminiscence)
3	The elders teach us: be a trickster , and you will survive.	Afro-American literature archetype (reminiscence)

This can be seen in the first quote, “**The elders teach us: a living dog is better than a dead lion**”. [6,7,8] The given text has an intertextual character, as the phrase was inserted from a long known text to the verbal layer of “The Moor's Account”. The quote is from the book Ecclesiastes, which is considered sacred to the Jews and authored by their fourth king, Solomon. The original source states:

“The most despicable living man’s state is preferable to that of the most noble who have died impenitent. Thus, it is better to be a live coward than a dead hero.” [9]

If we look at the context in which this aphorism is used by LaylaLalami, it reflects the thoughts of the slave Estebanico in the first chapter of the novel. The reason is the event described in the first episode. In the exposition of the work, the Spaniards landing on the shore captured four indigenous and tortured them in order to find gold-mines. Although the leader of the expedition, Senor Narvaez, did not understand the local language, he ordered to torture using various methods to obtain information from them. After that, the groans of the locals heard throughout the camp caused other noble members of the expedition react to the incident. While the protagonist, slave Estebanico, silently listened to a conversation between Dorantes and his brother Diego, who were discussing whether Narvaez understands the indigenous language, Estebanico thought that Narvaez was aware of the ways to torture, not the language. As even his master Dorantes, knowing the danger of the situation, did not want the leader of the expedition, Narvaez, to be doubted for his knowledge of the language, Estebanico restrained his tongue and thought that it would be better to be a living dog than a dead lion.

However, it would be natural that this interpretation of the aphorism would imply Estebanico's slavish self-preservation. After all, the silence, the inability to express own thoughts and attitudes are the signs of slavery, an eternal feature of the slave's fate. But at the same time, the meaning of this aphorism can also be interpreted from another perspective. It is understood that there is a philosophical observation that it is better to understand the truth and know the secret of longevity than to be proud in life and be deprived of the true essence and the gifts of life. It will not be difficult to understand this once you get acquainted with the events depicted in the work. The protagonist of the work – Mustafa al-Zamori – in the most cases is characterized by composure, silence, rather than pride. He always acts with the obedience and intelligence typical to Muslims. It is not secret that the etymology of the word "Islam" means "submission (to God)". And the philosophy of Muslim is reaching high through submission to Allah. Even though Mustafa (Estebanico) is characterized with silence, his inner reflections show that he approaches any situation consciously and sagely. He makes a voice in a conflict situation and helps to find a solution, to move events to the next stage. In particular, the eleventh chapter, entitled "**The story of the rafts**", can be the greatest example of the Estebanico's ingenuity. In a moment of difficulty, Estebanico puts forward the idea that "a ship must be built", and despite of that he is only a slave, the rest members of crew approve this plan. The other episodes of the novel also eventually serve to define the character of the protagonist. For example, in the chapter entitled "**The Story of the Avavares**", it was Mustafa who with his Arabic background gradually becomes a physician, and even the fair aristocracy follows the inferior Estebanico to avoid starvation and death. Apparently, the analyzed quote served as an important tool in revealing the protagonist's character and human qualities as it bears deep and broad meaning.

"Reminiscence. This term denotes the "references" present in literary texts to previous works or their groups, recalling them. Reminiscences, in other words, are images of literature in literature. The most common form of reminiscence is quotation, accurate or imprecise; "quoted" or remaining implicit. Reminiscences can be included in works consciously or arise independently of the will of the author ("literary reminiscences")." [7-16]. It is clear from the definition of reminiscence by the Russian scholar V. E. Khalizev that the literary term is broad and refers mainly to the inclusion of a phrase, subtext, explicit or abstract images reminiscent of another text in the literary work. The following phrase from Layla Lalami's biographical novel "The Moor's Account" is an example of reminiscence as it structurally resembles the aphorism first appeared in Haruki Murakami's novel "Kafka on the Shore" (2002) and later on various websites.

"The elders teach us: let my friends remember me; let all others forget about me."[6] = "If you remember me, then I don't care if everyone else forgets". (Haruki Murakami. "Kafka on the Shore".)

These two quotations are similar not only in structure and meaning, but also in the presence of the antonyms "remember" and "forget". The antonyms in the quotations indicate that the reminiscence was formed on the basis of an antithesis specific to the syntactic stylistic devices. At the core of the semantic link between the two quotations lies the meaning that "there is nothing in the world more than being in the heart of a friend, a loved one." The first quote, found in the novel "Kafka on the Shore" by Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, is used in the context of farewell of two beloved heroes. However, Lalami linked the quotation to the work modifying it lightly. To be more precise, the words of the slave Estebanico "let my friends remember me; let

all others forget about me", which can be interpreted as "I need nothing more than to live in the hearts of people who know me as a friend", is the generalization of the idea that "blacks need nothing more (attitude / reward / happiness) than to be in the hearts of friends who can see them as equals as all people". It is also essential to realize that this quote bears a deep message to readers "that the slave Estebanico needs nothing but the described ideas, reality, images, characters, whether they are true or false, explicit or implicit, real or fabricated to be kindly accepted by his friends regardless of the place where they come from and despite of their race, religion and age. Indeed, in modern American postcolonial literature, there is a clear tendency to present historical evidence in a new way, in terms of ethnic groups who have been treated as slaves for centuries, who had low social status, and were unable to express their views freely.

However, In "The Moor's Account", a narrower interpretation of this reminiscence can be found. The quote describes Mustafa and his white fellows, who were in a state of crisis in the fourteenth chapter, "**The Story of the Carancahuas**", when they met a new tribe of indigenous. Mustafa and the rest whites surviving from famine made not only on the American islands, but also multiplied their enemies, as they were involved in a whirlpool of misunderstandings and contradictions in the process of studying the nature of the local population, developing the concept of the local traditions. Some tribes treated them as enemies, with the intention of killing them, while others were friendly. The following Mustafa's inner monologue perfectly describes the his state and his friends when they encountered new tribes people, not knowing whether they were friends or foe:

"But what had he heard? Was it only the surprising news of our shipwreck on the Island of Misfortune a few months earlier? Or was it a bitter complaint that we had brought with us a disease that had killed most of the Han and the Capoques over the course of one short winter? Perhaps he had heard a tale that combined all of these details, and maybe even exaggerated them. Whatever it was, I hoped it was not an account of the cannibals among us – disease could always be excused, but eating human flesh would never be forgiven. *The elders teach us: let my friends remember me; let all others forget about me*". [6]

In this text, question-in-the-narrative predominates as a syntactic stylistic tool, and a monologue is formed that summarizes the tragic events through the protagonist asking himself a question. The fear leads the protagonist to the thought about what the locals have heard about them. "*What had they heard? Did they hear about the shipwreck on the Island of Misfortune a few months earlier? Did they know about the illness which they brought with themselves?*"[6] All these questions dismayed newcomers. At the end of these interrogations, the only hope to survival was on the man who introduced strangers (the expedition and its members), on his attitude towards them whether it was friendly or hostile. This quote is given at the peak of gradation and serves as a summary of the episode in the work.

"**The elders teach us: be a trickster, and you will survive**" [6]. This quote is used in the formation of the episodes in Chapter 24 of the work, entitled "**The Story of the Return**", and can be identified as an aphorism created by the author. This quote has a very complex intertextual character, as the archetype of the "trickster" at the heart of the quote is a phenomenon that can be found in the literature of all nations. In literature, especially in folklore, the motive of rescuing the poor from the oppressors through deception is common. Heroes such as "Mullah Nasriddin", "Shum bola" in Uzbek literature, "Kolobok", "Ivanushka Durachok" in

Russian literature, “Aldarkosa” in Kazakh literature and “Robin Hood” in English literature survived because of their wit and intelligence. They are the characters who saved the oppressed from tyranny. *“Modern African-American literary criticism has turned the trickster figure into an example of how it is possible to overcome a system of oppression from within”*. [8]

Apparently, the archetype of the trickster is universal and can be classified as an intertextual methodological device. In the aphorism, the motive of survival using trickery is generalized, allowing it to be widely and effectively applied. For this reason, Layla Lalami elevated it to the level of a paremiological compound and put it into the structure “The elders teach us:...”. A contextual analysis reveals that this aphorism helped to conclude the series of events in the novel and to find a solution. For example, Mustafa is forced to use a trick to escape from his master, as Senor Dorantes despite of his words to let the Estebanico free, did not keep his word, deceiving Estebanico, as an excuse every time. Therefore, the slave joined amigos (group of Native Americans from different tribes, sold to the whites; cooks, two priests and many others) in the new land expedition of Spaniards. He worked out a very careful plan, first intimidating the priests with his taunts about “human-eating indigenous people”. Later, when Father Marco and Father Onorato’s (the priests) desire to survive overcame their goal of finding gold. Estebanico leaves them behind and continues the way himself and with his pregnant wife and a few “amigos”. However, as previously agreed, Estebanico sent a message to the priests each time when he explores a new tribe (a palm-sized cross - a city with almost no gold, hand-sized cross - a city with moderate amount of gold, and man-sized cross - a city with an abundant amount of gold). As Mustafa led the expedition inland, each time he reached a new tribe, he sent a man of the ten-member expedition to report to the priests. When he arrives in the town of Hawikuh, he sends the last member, the priest Marco (Father Marco) with a palm-sized cross, and then asks the chief of that tribe to spread the rumor of his death. The best teller from the Native Americans spreads the news of Estebanico’s death everywhere. With the help of such a trick, Mustafa frees himself from his white master, Senor Dorantes, the colonizers; and continues his life in new lands, with new family. Thus, in the pages of history, the name of Mustafa al-Zamori is sealed as the first black man to set foot on the American land. [17-20]

CONCLUSION

The analysis shows how contemporary postmodernist biographer interweaves the texts and literary reminiscences to hitch the diverse national archetypes and aesthetic views into one literary text to reflect cosmopolitanism of contemporary world. Historical facts a remolded/sculpted into present values through postmodern language and this transformation reminds molecular cohesion of identical nations into one multicultural universe.

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