

LAILA LALAMI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXPLORATION OF THE NEW WORLD WITH "THE MOOR'S ACCOUNT"

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Annotation. The following article is about the narration "The Moor's Account" by Laila Lalami and determining the contribution to explore the new world. The writers writing style, the avail usage of words and a brief summary of the narration. Moreover, the information about the heroes of book will be given through the article.

Key words: slave, personal enrichment, slavery, consolation, temptation, expedition, Estebanico.

The Moor's Account is a novel by Laila Lalami. It was a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction finalist in 2015. Imagine that you're a North African slave whose owner is part of a blinkered 16th century castilian expedition to claim present-day florida and other states for the spanish crown. And say that the intrepid idiot leading this venture has little knowledge of the region's geography, so that he loses contact with his ships after ordering most of his men — you and your owner included — to disembark and march inland with him. Imagine all of this, and you'll have an inkling of the travails undergone by estebanico, narrator of laila lalami's new novel, "the moor's account." "the moor's account," which purports to tell this story from estebanico's perspective, stalls in parts and suffers from an anticlimactic final section, but otherwise is a bold and exhilarating bid to give a real-life figure muzzled by history the chance to have his say in fiction. It also offers perceptive observations on the human condition, sometimes with a welcome touch of humor. "a man who has had to relieve himself in full view of others finds it harder to assert his superiority over them," notes a shrewd estebanico of the increasingly moot distinctions between master and slave. In 1527, a fleet of five ships set sail from spain for the new world, on a mission to settle the recently discovered land of la florida. After making landfall on the gulf coast, near where the city of st petersburg stands today, the expedition's leader, pánilo de narváez, headed into the country's unmapped interior in search of the gold he had convinced himself would be found there. Within days his men became hopelessly lost; soon after they began to die, from starvation, disease, drowning and the depredations of local tribes. In the end, of an original contingent of 300, just four survived: three spanish gentlemen - álvar núñez cabeza de vaca, alonso del castillo and andrés dorantes - and estebanico,

a moorish slave. History, it's said, is written by the victors. While the narváez expedition was a catastrophe of almost absurd proportions, its name used for years afterwards as a byword for disaster, these four men (who were eventually picked up in northern Mexico by a group of Spanish slavers, "strangely dressed and in the company of Indians"), were, if not victors, at least survivors. Together, they'd lived through the worst the continent could throw at them and even, ultimately, carved out a niche for themselves as healers among the indigenous Americans. Their reappearance was a triumph bordering on the miraculous, and Cabeza de Vaca's tale of their adventures, which he published on his return to Spain, was justly celebrated. But his story also revealed that, even among survivors, some are more equal than others. While the three Castilians were given joint billing, the slave who had been with them every step of the way for the eight long years of their exile was confined to a single line of biography. "The fourth [of us]," says Cabeza de Vaca, "is Estebanico, an Arab Negro from Azemmour." And that's it. When she came across Cabeza de Vaca's chronicle nearly 500 years after it was written, Laila Lalami was first puzzled, then fascinated by the omission. Nowadays, Estebanico is believed by many to have been the first African explorer of North America and is consequently feted as a figure of historical significance, but at the time, his skin colour and his status ensured his silence. Lalami's Pulitzer prize-shortlisted, Booker-longlisted novel is her attempt to give him a voice. The Moor's account returns us to the astonishing, terrifying world of light, heat and violence that Cabeza de Vaca described, seen this time through the eyes of a man who has been taken there as property, and has neither the sense of manifest destiny nor the prospect of personal enrichment that propelled the Castilians forward.

Cabeza de Vaca told us nothing of Estebanico's backstory, so Lalami furnishes him with one of her own inventions; his jaundiced account of the expedition is interspersed with heartsick reminiscences of his former life. His real name, we learn, is Mustafa; at one time, a prosperous merchant in a prosperous Moroccan city. But when Azemmour fell to the Portuguese in 1513 its inhabitants quickly began to starve, and Mustafa, desperate to save his family, sold himself into slavery. He was shipped to Seville and hauled into a church, where he was christened and renamed; his faith and his identity stripped from him in a single act. This ability of language to shape reality is the Moor's account's leitmotif, and it's through Lalami's investigation of it that her novel breaks out of the historical fiction ghetto and establishes its broader enterprise. "How utterly strange were the ways of the Castilians," muses Mustafa as, fresh off the boat in La Florida, he listens to the expedition's notary claim the ground they stand on for God, St Peter

and the king. “just by saying that something was so, they believed that it was. I know now that these conquerors ... Gave speeches not to voice the truth, but to create it.” Yet for all his professed bemusement, it becomes clear as the novel unfolds that it is precisely mustafa’s own gift for storytelling, for using words to remodel the world around him, that permits him to survive. A natural linguist, he is quick to pick up the languages of the new world, and when the travellers encounter new tribes, his telling of their tale secures them gifts of food and shelter. Later, their foreign folk remedies earn them a reputation as medicine men, and their situation becomes less dicey – but with success comes the possibility of failure, and failure, in their position, would likely prove fatal. Again, mustafa falls back on words. “if i was confronted with an illness i did not recognise,” he says, “i listened to the sick man or woman and offered consolation in the guise of a long story ... This, too, was something i learned in the markets of azemmur: a good story can heal.” The moor’s account is more than a good story, it’s a great one: rich, vivid and gripping; a thoughtful investigation into how we frame the narratives of our own lives. Lalami’s creation of estebanico on the page as a living, breathing, fully realised human being, meanwhile, gives him a chance at the afterlife which his fellow travellers saw fit to deny him the first time round. Sure, it’s just a story, but as lalami tells us over and over again in the account, there’s really no such thing as “just” a story. In the right hands, stories have extraordinary power: to comfort, support and transform. lalami’s book is loosely based on treasurer álvar núñez cabeza de vaca’s famed report chronicling the disastrous narváez expedition of 1528-1536. Hundreds of men lost their lives to disease, dehydration and hostile indians while traipsing through florida, sailing around galveston bay on makeshift rafts, and wandering about in texas, with a few engaging in cannibalism of colleagues who died along the way. When they finally reached a spanish colony in present-day mexico, only four survivors remained — estebanico, his master dorantes, a man named castillo, and the aforementioned cabeza de vaca. The moor’s account (2014) is a fictionalized memoir of the first african explorer in the new world. Very little is known about him beyond the fact that he was one of only four survivors of the ill fated narváez expedition. In this historical novel, which cleverly employs flashbacks and first-person narration, author laila lalami imagines mustafa telling his own story of endurance and survival. Mustafa was born in north africa in the early 16th century. Despite his father’s desire that mustafa follow in his footsteps and become a notary, he insists on becoming a merchant. During his apprenticeship, he learns quickly and becomes wealthy. When presented

with an opportunity to make a quick profit by reselling slaves, he gives in to temptation.

He comes to regret both disappointing his father and participating in the slave trade. A few years later, his father dies amid a terrible drought that leaves the natives of his Portuguese-occupied city in famine. Mustafa sells himself into slavery to save his family from starvation. His first master is a Spanish merchant named Rodriguez. Rodriguez has Mustafa baptized as a Christian and renames him Esteban. Rodriguez is an unpredictable master who sometimes grants privileges but also administers cruel beatings. Eventually, Rodriguez settles a gambling debt by selling Esteban to a Spanish gentleman named Dorantes. Dorantes renames him Estebanico. Tempted by tales of the riches discovered by Cortés in Mexico, Dorantes brings Mustafa across the ocean on an expedition to the New World led by Pánfilo de Narváez. Shortly after landing in La Florida, the Armada notary makes an official proclamation claiming the land and all its riches for Spain. After a series of misfortunes, including shipwrecks, storms, disease, starvation, and numerous attacks from the natives, only four members of the expedition survive: Mustafa, Captain Dorantes, the treasurer Cabeza de Vaca, and a young nobleman named Castillo.

At first, the starving men are taken in by the natives. The natives are willing to temporarily house and feed them, but they soon find themselves treated like slaves. The Castilians lose their sense that they have come to conquer the New World and its inhabitants. They learn the native language, wear native clothes, and adopt the local customs. Eventually, the men are fully accepted by a tribe, and each man takes a native wife. Mustafa becomes a shaman and is revered by the natives. With a large band of native followers, they travel west from tribe to tribe as healers. The men are content with their lives with the natives until they meet a group of European explorers. After this encounter, the survivors are brought to Mexico City, where they are commanded to recount the story of their expedition for the official record. Cabeza de Vaca, as the highest-ranking survivor, makes himself the hero of the story. Mustafa is not invited to tell his story. Once the story has been recorded, Mustafa is hopeful that he'll be set free and able to return to North Africa with his native wife. While in the Spanish settlement, the European men return to their old ways. Dorantes and Castillo abandon their native wives, marry rich widows, and establish large estates in the New World. Cabeza de Vaca returns to Spain a rich man and becomes famous for his account of the disastrous expedition. Dorantes delays notarizing the papers that will declare Mustafa a free man. In the end, Mustafa takes his destiny into his own hands. He convinces Dorantes to sell him to the viceroy, sets off on

a new expedition, and then instructs the native guides to send word back to his new master that he has been killed. After freeing himself, he lives the rest of his life among his wife's people. Mustafa dreams that someday his unborn child may fulfill his dream to return to his homeland. He wants his wife to tell their child the story of his adventures in new world. Most importantly, he wants his child to "learn to never put his life in the hands of another man".

Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar ro'yxati:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Moor%27s_Account
2. <https://lailalalami.com/the-moors-account/about/>