

History From Below: The Moor's Account as a Counter-Eurocentric Narrative

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Abstract

Early accounts of colonial encounters have largely been dominated by narratives written by the victors, which oftentimes silenced and pushed other voices to the margins. And for centuries, the history of many a colonial exploration has been given account through a Eurocentric lens, henceforth undermining the Subaltern voice. Postcolonialism explores the binary colonizer-colonized relationship to disrupt the dominant colonial narratives. Within this framework, the present paper examines Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account* as a postcolonial reimagining of history. By reclaiming the voice of Mustapha Ez-zemmouri, otherwise known as Estebánico, Lalami challenges the recurring Eurocentric framework in Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación* and constructs a counter-narrative. This study is significant as it underscores the subjectivity of historical accounts and offers insights into how alternative Subaltern narratives act as a means for epistemic resistance, challenging colonial constructions of the past. It situates the novel within the theoretical frameworks of Postcolonialism, Subaltern Studies, Otherness, and The Third Space, emphasizing *The Moor's Account's* potential to inspire the genre of historical fiction to serve as a means of reclaiming the erased voices in popular narratives.

Keywords: Historical Fiction - Subaltern Studies – Otherness – Postcolonialism – Eurocentric - *The Moor's Account* - *La Relación*.

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1. Introduction:

Laila Lalami's Prize-winning Novel, *The Moor's Account*, published in 2014, is a work of historical fiction inspired by the real-life events of the 1528 Narvaèz¹ expedition to explore La Florida. This narrative reinterprets history, focusing on the experiences of the black Moroccan Moor Mustapha Ez-zemmouri, also known as Estebánico, as he navigates his struggles with Power, Identity, Hybridity, Agency, and Resistance. This paper analyzes Lalami's novel through a postcolonial lens, exploring how it weaves the aforementioned themes. In particular, this article critiques dominant narratives and contends that *The Moor's Account* serves as a counter-narrative to Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación*².

Much scholarly research has been published on *The Moor's Account*, including works by Stephanie Barbé Hammer (2015), Martina Koegeler-Abdi (2026), and Sanaila Ghufraan (2020), which interpret Lalami's work from different perspectives. Hammer argues in her blog "Uncovering layers of otherness: Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*" that Lalami's work presents slavery in the Americas from a historical perspective distinct from that of the Southern States' plantations, prompting reconsideration of the objectivity of historical accounts (Hammer). Meanwhile, Koegeler-Abdi examined Lalami's Novel as a work of narrative resistance, arguing that vulnerability is not a form of weakness but rather a relational condition imposed by unequal power dynamics. She also introduced the concept of adaptive agency, which can be seen through Laila Lamai's novel, as she

¹ **Panfilo de Narvaèz** (1478- 1528) was a Spanish conquistador, colonial official, and explorer.

² **La Relación:** The Account and Commentaries of Governor Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, of what occurred on the two journeys that he made to the Indies.

reworks and adapts to dominant traditions instead of eradicating them, which allows her to resist what Koegeler-Abdi's article connotes as "narrative erasure" of racialized subjects while showcasing the contributions of historical and literary discourses in constructing racial hierarchies. (Koegeler-Abdi 2026) However, Ghufraan, in her article "Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*: A Lost Narrative," focused on Lalami's narrative style, praising it and highlighting the artistry in the subtle shifts between past and present in Mustapha's experiences, which illustrate Lalami's creative writing abilities ("(PDF) Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*").

Sensri Insaf and Benabed Fella, in their article, "Narrating the extremes: The language of suffering and survival in Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account*", emphasize that although Laila Lalami states in her copyright section that her novel is a work of fiction and that any similarities to real-life characters and events are pure coincidence, she also clearly frames the context as being the Narvaèz expedition, which means that from a contemporary standpoint, Lalami's novel can be read as a literary work that corrects and completes the historical record of Estebanico's character. (Sensri&Benabed 2019)

Khajieva, F. M., subsequently states in his article on the cultural-aesthetic function of intertextual devices in *The Moor's Account* by Layla Lalami, that the novel can be viewed as an attempt to unfold slavery and race-discrimination issues that emerged in the past. He adds that the author skillfully reconsiders and re-evaluates the diversity of cultures and world outlooks in contemporary societies. (Feruza Melsovna 2021)

The Moor's Account follows the life of Mustapha Ez-zemmouri as he becomes Estebánico and joins a doomed expedition that will drastically change the course of his life. The novel is divided into five main parts. The first part, *The Origin*, explores the loss of identity and freedom. The second part, *Voyage and Catastrophe*, reveals the greed of conquerors, the fragility of conquest, and what led to disasters. The third part, *Survival and Transformation*, examines the themes of survival and the power of knowledge. The fourth part, *The Pilgrimage of the Survivors*, explores Hybridity and humanity across cultures as survivors navigate through vast lands. The final part, *The Return to "Civilisation"*, shows the colonial ego and the strategic erasure of the subaltern voice. In this last section, the novel highlights the gap between history and the memory of the oppressed voices.

The first section of this article delves into the historical context of the Narvaèz expedition, *La Relación*, and the scholarly perspectives surrounding concepts of Eurocentrism, Otherness, and Subalternity that are present in the narrative. The second section provides a critical and analytical investigation into the various manifestations of disputing these concepts through the postcolonial lens.

2. *Background of the study:*

In 1528, Pánfilo de Narvaèz led an expedition comprised of approximately 600 conquistadors and adventurers, for the purpose of discovering, exploring, and conquering the unknown territory of Florida. Within a year of their departure, not being close to reaching Florida, and struck by a series of calamities, including shipwrecks, storms, disease, starvation, cannibalism, and repeated native attacks, the force dwindled to 15 survivors. Among them, only four Spaniards -including Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and Estebán, a Moorish slave who was the first recorded black man to have entered Florida- survived and reached Mexico in 1536. ("Panfilo de Narvaèz | Exploration, Florida, Mexico | Britannica" 2025)

In 1537, Cabeza de Vaca delivered a report, *La Relación*, later published in 1542, as the exclusive narrative of what had occurred during the aforementioned unfortunate expedition. While his report included many other narrators, the perspectives of indigenous and African individuals have been marginalized, ostracized, and silenced. This is particularly true for Estebánico, who was the sole survivor not given a designated section to share his perspective in the narrative. Estebán's presence in the text illustrates precisely the condition of the subaltern; for he is crucial to the expedition's survival, yet historically he remains voiceless. His identity is reduced to race and servitude, for he was, on numerous occasions, referred to as "Moor", "Black", and "Slave". (*Álvar Cabeza De Vaca Chronicle Of The Narvaèz Expedition* 2022)

These attempts at minimizing denied Estebán his experience and agency². Spanish accounts and their reproductions have treated non-Spaniards and non-Christians as if they had no consciousness of their own, and therefore no ability to make and write their own history. Hence, this silencing is not incidental but structural: as

¹ **Moor**: A Moroccan or a member of the Muslim population of the former Al-Andalus, now Spain and Portugal. ("Moor | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica" 2025)

² **Agency** is defined as the capacity to make decisions regarding one's own body and the fundamental freedoms essential for establishing personal boundaries, continuity, and uniqueness in one's sense of self. ("Personal Agency - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics" 2013)

Gayatri Spivak argues in his “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, the voices of the colonized are often mediated or erased within colonial discourse, leaving them unable to *speak* on their own terms. (“File:Spivak Gayatri 1988 Can the Subaltern Speak.Pdf - Monoskop” 2025)

The literary narrative of de Vaca’s account can only be described as a written record of the Americas, authored by a European. This description is a result of his deliberate portrayal of Indian tribes, their languages, and their “uncivilized” lifestyles, which not only highlighted his ethnocentrism¹ but also affirmed Edward Said’s Otherness² as being central to colonial identity construction (“File:Said Edward Orientalism 1979.Pdf - Monoskop” 2015). In Western Europe, this process of dispossession was seen as “the annihilation of the small peasant.” (“Economic Manuscripts: Capital Vol. I - Chapter Twenty-Seven” 1999)

The overall impression thus reflects a predominant Authoritative voice, that being the Eurocentric³ Narrative. As a result, these overlooked voices and untold histories raise questions about what they may have contributed to such a journey.

Laila Lalami’s *The Moor’s Account* reclaims the suppressed voice in Cabeza de Vaca’s *Relación* by centering Estebánico, rendering him a narrator who speaks in the first person. This shift restores his agency, individuality, and humanity, transforming him from a silenced figure into the active subject of history. (“The Moor’s Account – Laila Lalami” 2014)

3. *Theoretical Framework:*

Postcolonial theory is a terminologically simple concept that refers to the theory of everything after colonialism. Beneath this initial simplicity, it remains a complex approach that is not as easy to comprehend or form a unified, common, and concrete definition of. Postcolonial theory tackles colonialism, its aftermath, and the binary relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, in an attempt to dismantle and challenge popular narratives provided by colonial powers (EBSCO 2021).

Theorists have long argued and published multiple critical works regarding the theory and its nomination. For instance, “Postcolonial” is subject to much debate as it does not refer to a specific period of history, which makes it encapsulate all times and places, rendering it vague and meaningless. Aijaz Ahmed, an Indian Marxist philosopher, literary theorist, and political commentator, has pointed out that the aforementioned vagueness around the concept leads to its meaninglessness. He states that “Colonialism” is always present in one area of the world or another, meaning that everyone is or has been, at a certain point, the colonized, the colonizer, or the postcolonial, or in some cases, all of them at once. (Ahmad 1995)

Postcolonialism can be defined as the period in history that addresses the consequences of Western colonization of Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia. In literature, it refers to the literary pieces that reflect upon the effects of colonialism (Study.Com 2025). A famous postcolonial literary piece, authored by the Palestinian Edward Said, is *Orientalism*. Through it, Said showcases the European -or the civilized- categorization of the colonial outposts as the “Orient”, as a way to garner strength and identity against a mythical personalization of the Orient as a kind of “Subaltern or underground self.” (“File:Said Edward Orientalism 1979.Pdf - Monoskop” 2015)

A key movement in postcolonial studies was the 1980 intervention of the Subaltern group. It gave rise to the concept of “Subaltern Studies”, which was coined by the Indian Historian Ranajit Guha, and stands for the general attribute of subordination; it explores the binary relationship between the Subaltern and the ruling classes. Subaltern Studies also aim to uncover the histories of groups that were shunned and marginalized in colonial and postcolonial archives. (*Subaltern Studies – Postcolonial Studies* 2020)

In this context, the postcolonial theorist and professor of humanities in the English and Comparative Literature Departments at Harvard University, Homi K. Bhabha, introduces the concept of “Third space”, which represents the In-betweenness and hybridity that occurs when the colonial power attempts to morph the identity of the colonized people. It is this negotiation of cultural differences of the colonizer and the colonized that results in the emergence of a hybrid cultural identity. (“(PDF) Homi K. Bhabha’s Third Space Theory and Cultural Identity Today” 2022)

¹ **Ethnocentrism:** The attitude that one’s own group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others. (“Definition of ETHNOCENTRISM” 2025)

² **Otherness:** the quality or state of being other or different. (“Definition of OTHERNESS” 2025)

³ **Eurocentric:** reflecting a tendency to interpret the world in terms of European or Anglo-American values and experiences. (“Definition of EUROCENTRIC” 2025)

In addition, Decolonization involves uncovering and dismantling colonial authority and its impacts, which encompass the subtly integrated elements of cultural forces that supported colonial powers even after gaining independence. The struggle to challenge and eradicate colonial perspectives, oversights, assumptions, distortions, and influences has been prominent in the rich field of postcolonial and decolonial literature. (Mambrol 2017)

In his *Decolonizing the Mind*, Thiong'o argues that colonialism detonates a "cultural bomb" through the destruction of indigenous languages and cultures by imposing foreign ones as a means for domination and alienation. Ngũgĩ advocates for a colonial resistance through literature using the indigenous African languages. For him, adopting a colonial tongue would inevitably lead to the alienation of one's cultural heritage and would internalize a sense of inferiority. (Thiong'o 1998)

4. Methodology

To investigate the elements of Eurocentrism present in Cabeza De Vaca's account, "La Relación", this paper adopts a qualitative approach and studies Laila Lalami's work of historical fiction, "The Moor's Account", through a postcolonial lens. Doing so allows the novel to challenge the European mainstream historical narratives.

This study divides the novel into five major sections, each dealing with themes of identity and loss thereof, subalternity, agency, hybridity, and written resistance. All while incorporating various works authored by significant African diasporic writers, such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The first part, The Origin. The second part, Voyage and Catastrophe. The third part, Survival and Transformation. The fourth part, The Pilgrimage of the Survivors. The last Part, The Return to "Civilization".

5. History from below: The Moor's Account.

"You have no control over who lives, who dies, who tells your story." -Lin-Manuel Miranda. ("Finale (Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story) Lyrics — Hamilton (Musical)" 2025)

It is a truth commonly acknowledged that humans are only capable of so much and cannot, by any means, control or alter the events of the past and future. The aforementioned Miranda's quote from his Broadway musical, *Hamilton*, simplifies the concept in one sentence. However, this theory is challenged and dismantled by Laila Lalami's persistence in changing the narrative and the narrator. Her stylistic choice in *The Moor's Account* of using the first-person to recount history through fiction via a shunned voice was as strategic as it was creative. The following section presents a critical and analytical inquiry into the manifestations of countering de Vaca's Eurocentric account, *La Relación*.

The Moor's Account is a fictional memoir that recounts a 16th-century expedition to the *New World* from the perspective of a slave. The novel blends creative storytelling with historical events, offering an alternative history through the eyes and words of a subaltern historical figure, making it integral to the postcolonial movement. Postcolonial themes such as empowering the subaltern, storytelling as a form of resistance, challenging the popular narratives, and re-centering silenced and marginalized voices are all persistent throughout the novel.

Lalami sets off by introducing the protagonist, Mustapha Ibn Mohammed Ez-zemmouri, and follows his story of bondage to become a member of a Castilian exploration group in search of La Florida or the "New World". Mustapha reminisces about his childhood, birth, parents, and his father's prodding to follow in his footsteps toward studying at Al-Qarawin University and thus becoming a notary.

This ambition was short-lived as Mustapha found himself drawn to the life and income of merchants more than that of scholars, becoming a flourishing businessman who lost everything soon after his father's passing and his emergent responsibility to support his family. As a last and final resort, he sells himself into slavery, offering his family his worth in money as a parting gift, as he, tragically, never managed to see them again.

This part of the novel is set in the city of Azemmour, Morocco, Mustapha's hometown. Lalami introduces the protagonist here, along with his cultural identity, heritage, and background, making references to his Islamic identity as he says a central Muslim phrase that portrays faith and acceptance of God's will, "We all belong to God, and to Him we return." (P. 76)

The novel consists of five key parts, consistent with major themes in Mustapha's story that serve Lalami's quest to give voice to the voiceless, and they are as follows:

5.1. The Origin:

Mustapha Ibn Mohammed Ez-zemmouri recounts his life in Azemmour, Morocco. Born into poverty and trained as a merchant, he sells himself into slavery to save his family from starvation. His first master, Rodriguez, baptizes him as a Christian and changes his name to Estebánico. Thereby stripping him of his Moroccan and Muslim identities, leaving him with a sense of loss and orphanism by the ordeal, as is present in this direct quote: “left it as Esteban. Just Esteban - converted and orphaned in one gesture” (*The Moor’s Account*, 109).

Estebánico later gets taken under another master, Dorantes, after Rodriguez drowns himself in gambling debt. This act showcases the interplay of subordination and dominance, the binary of power and lack thereof, as seen through Subaltern Studies. After being a slave, Mustapha loses his agency, hence his sense of self. He loses his fundamental freedoms and becomes subaltern to the Spaniards.

From having an identity to no longer having one is where the story of Mustapha begins, his origin. The sacrifice he made for his family was more than it should have been. In hindsight, this sacrifice brought about much more than he or anybody could have anticipated.

5.2. Voyage and Catastrophe:

With Dorantes as his master, Estebánico cannot do but follow along as part of the Narváez expedition to Florida, with many eager and not-so-eager men and women setting off on this journey. The voyage highlights the Greed of the conquistadors upon hearing of a city of Gold, called Apalache. In search of it, Mustapha uncovers the brutality of the Spaniards as they torture Indian prisoners for information. He narrates his fear and pities his station and helplessness, and finds solace in reminiscing about his lost self and hometown. This deepens Mustapha’s character and his innate sense of power and guilt in desperate circumstances.

Ere long, the journey turns nightmarish, as the force becomes plagued by hunger, disease, shipwrecks, internal conflict, and disputes with the indigenous people. What had set out to be a journey of exploration and conquest quickly spirals into disaster as their numbers dwindle rapidly with each catastrophe.

5.3. Survival and Transformation:

From hundreds, only a handful survive. Mustapha, Dorantes, Castillo, and Cabeza de Vaca keep their lives by adapting to Indigenous ways of life. Mustapha’s skills as a healer, trader, and interpreter elevate him from servitude to a respected figure among the peoples they encounter. Through his aforementioned capacities, he becomes indispensable to the remaining few, which gives him hope and a false sense of freedom. He begins to negotiate the terms of his liberty with his master.

Within this dynamic, Mustapha is treated as more than a slave and less than a Spaniard. His position shifts, and he starts hoping for a day when the journey will come to its closure, and he will be permitted to return to his former self. The transformation here stems from within Mustapha as he recognises both his strengths and limitations within this new colonial structure.

5.4. Pilgrimage of the Survivors:

Their march across foreign lands becomes more pilgrimage than conquest, a test of faith, endurance, and the meaning of freedom. Here, the expedition’s remaining four set out on a years-long trek across undiscovered vast lands, occupied by the indigenous communities.

The present journey surpasses physical survival as Mustapha finds himself troubled with queries of power and its dynamics, faith, and his beliefs as the group traverses the various territories. The profound spiritual transformation within the protagonist represents a somewhat fictionalized pilgrimage, for his navigation through the unknown rendered him susceptible to confronting the harsh realities of colonialism and the complexities of human nature.

5.5. The Return to “Civilization”:

When the survivors arrived in Mexico and rejoined Spanish power, Mustapha faced a cruel realization: he had been deceived, for not only was he not warranted the freedom he was promised, but he was also shunned from sharing his voice. His experiences were sidelined, and the history as he witnessed it was rewritten. The account of the expedition, the suffering, the survival, and the triumph were all drafted to suit the Spaniards’ tastes and to glorify the otherwise failed expedition. This resulted in a narrative that is vastly Eurocentric and dissimilar to Mustapha’s truth.

In reclaiming his own story, Mustapha resists this silencing, leaving behind *his* version of the truth through his account, *The Moor’s Account*.

- This five-part progression is simplified in **Figure 1** below.

6. Discussion:

In this light, Lalami's work falls under both the postcolonial and Subaltern Studies archives. Through it, she gives Mustapha his own voice, aiding him to retell history from the perspective of an enslaved Moor. Her stylistic choice of adopting the first-person narrative in her novel strategically destabilised dominant historical narratives, challenging the Eurocentric historiography present in Cabeza de Vaca's *La Relación*.

It can be argued that Mustapha's silenced voice reflects upon the broader colonial context of silencing African and Indigenous histories. In her TED Talk entitled "The Danger of a Single Story", Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie tackles the general issue of the silencing of these narratives in terms of availability. She explains that American and British books and novels were more available to her to read in Nigeria; that characters with white skin and colored eyes were most popular, she did not even think that people who looked like her had any representation in literature ("The Danger of a Single Story" 2009). This shows that the shortage of literary inclusion of African and Indigenous people in the popular mainstream narratives contributes greatly to the silencing and, thence, the erasure of these voices.

In simpler terms, colonial literary erasure can appear in different forms beyond the alteration of historical accounts. Depicting only one race is akin to disregarding all others. A singular, prevailing narrative can confine entire cultures within stereotypes and mute different viewpoints, meaning that only listening to one account of a group's history denies their humanity and intricacy. Lalami thus uses fiction to restore their agency and help the Subaltern "speak", as per Spivak's terms.

The novel's general form, a blend of autobiography, oral tradition, and historical fiction, is symbolic in its representation of issues such as migration, race, belonging, and who has the authority to record history. In this respect and through the lens of postcolonialism, *The Moor's Account* resonates deeply with other African diasporic authors such as Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Chimamanda Adichie, who write to reclaim silenced histories of their people.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe captures the complexities of the encounters between African communities and European colonial powers. He explores the strife between tradition and change in the context of the arrival of white missionaries to Igbo, the society to which the protagonist, Okonkwo, belongs. The proverbs and oral tradition, among other stylistic patterns incorporated within the novel, are intertwined with the English narratives to assert cultural authenticity, restore agency, and resist colonial erasure ("*Things-Fall-Apart-Chinua-Achebe FULL TEXT*" 1959). This allows the Novel to serve as a counter-Eurocentric narrative, along with *The Moor's Account*.

In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Matigari*, the main character, Matigari ma Njiruung, is a revolutionary who, upon returning to his homeland after years of armed conflict, anticipates peace and justice, only to discover the corrupt remnants left by his colonial oppressors. The African Elite have embraced the corrupt practices of the colonizers and have begun perpetuating the very system they fought against. Through *Matigari*, Thiong'o reinterprets African independence in a way that reveals how postcolonial societies mirror colonial frameworks, fundamentally challenging the depiction of independence as victory. (Ngugi 1990)

The political act of "writing back" or "Re-historization" is, in itself, empowering to the Subaltern and Indigenous communities. It is a form of emancipation as all the aforementioned authors strive, through their works, to liberate the ostracized peoples from the cultural domination of colonial narratives. The fictitious voice Laila Lalami gave Mustapha was a show of resistance; that he will not be silenced, even in a colonizer's tongue. That she will reclaim the erased history and take a step toward cultural freedom.

Incidentally, the five-part progression shown in **Fig.1** traces more than a linear biography and embodies a cycle of Loss and Recovery; From the Origin, where Mustapha begins with the roots of his Moroccan identity engraved within him, to reclaiming it in *The Return* to "Civilization", where he and his contributions get erased from official records. This erasure completes and balances the cycle, rather than ending it, for Mustapha adopts Laila Lalami's fictional voice, writes his account, and restores his identity.

- This cycle can be simplified through **Figure 2** below.

In the "Losing all agency" part of the novel, Mustapha experiences shifts in his identity; From being stripped to becoming nothing but the Christianized Estebánico, to being indispensable and gaining recognition for his skills in dire times, to hoping for freedom, and then to losing all, including his historical footprint.



Figure 1: The five-part progression of the novel.

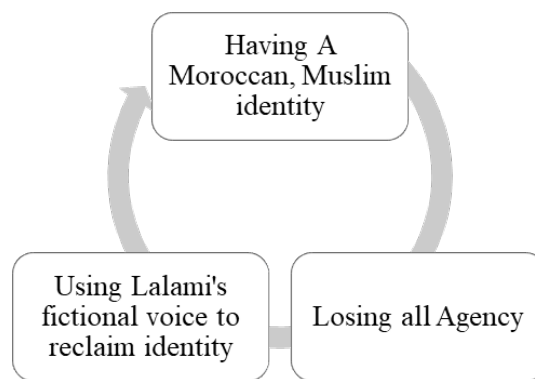


Figure 2: The cycle of Loss and Recovery.

It is worth noting that Estebánico was and is a significant figure in both the Moroccan and African American contexts. During the African American struggle for emancipation and civil rights in the 1950s and 1960s, Estebánico was put on a pedestal, beside Rosa Parks, for his courage and for being the first African to explore the Americas. His status is more elevated in his hometown, Azemmour, Morocco. In 2013, he was celebrated as the “African Columbus” and was the theme of the Remp’Arts street art festival in Azemmour.(Next Is Africa 2024)

Through this reception, scholarly research, and Lalami’s novel, Estebánico's story reached audiences far beyond African and other marginalised communities, restoring his agency in life rather than solely through fiction. In front of the Capitol in the city of Austin, Texas, a statue of Estebánico stands tall in his memory and as a symbol of emancipation. (Idem)

Together, these works demonstrate the decolonial power inherent in storytelling and fiction, acting as tools of Decolonization that challenge Eurocentric discourses. The sense of hope for liberation that Mustapha experienced in *Survival and Transformation* mirrors the larger framework of the decolonisation journey. During this stage, those who were colonised begin to dream up a future. “Dreaming” in this context signifies the emergence of a plethora of possibilities, prompting individuals to contemplate and develop their own visions for social order and governance. (Battiste 2011)

7. Conclusion:

In essence, *Things Fall Apart*, *Matigari*, and *The Moor's Account* stand as profound works of literary, historical, and political emancipation by reclaiming the African voice and challenging both colonial and postcolonial distorted discourses. Through their novels, Chinua Achebe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, and Laila Lalami have contested the Eurocentric depictions of Africa as Subaltern and voiceless, thereby restoring historical balance, affirming African agency, and preserving cultural memory.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *The Danger of a Single Story* expands on this mission in a contemporary context,

stressing the idea that having control over a narrative equates to having control over how things get perceived. Her appeal to welcome diverse narratives confronts the enduring colonial habit of depicting the “Other” through limited and singular stories.

In this context, *The Moor’s Account* is a remarkable work of historical fiction that challenges the Eurocentric narrative in de Vaca’s *La Relación*, and advocates for the agency of the Subaltern and marginalized. The narrative tracing the life of the protagonist, Mustapha Ibn Mohammed Ez-zemmouri, reimagines the silenced chapter of his history.

Utilising the themes of Resistance, Identity, Agency, and Hybridity, Lalami rewrites the conquest from the perspective of a Moroccan black slave, transforming him from a footnote into a realized voice. The five-part progression of the novel mirrors the trajectory of Subaltern histories that were silenced and then given voices through fiction. By positioning the novel as a counter-narrative to Cabeza de Vaca’s, Lalami’s work highlights the historiographic limitations of Eurocentrism in the face of Indigenous histories, thereby constituting an epistemological framework.

Ultimately, *The Moor’s Account* accentuates the cultural significance of reclaiming marginalized voices, which serves as a reminder that history is forever incomplete without the testimony of those ostracised by it. This article opens the way for further research into the role of the Subaltern’s representation in reshaping historical consciousness, foregrounding marginalized voices. Additional theoretical frameworks, such as Memory Studies, may further enhance understanding regarding the construction of marginalized histories in literature.

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