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Studying intertextual relations between “Othello” and “Season of migration to the North”

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Abstract

This paper explores the intertextual elements between Shakespearean text *Othello* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* using Bazerman's (2004) model of intertextuality. The study sheds light on the process of influence and transformation of the text *Othello* when situated in the context of culture. The study shows that all the explicit and implicit elements of intertextuality between selected texts foregrounded how narratives are created using characters and symbols from a particular culture to create ruptures in the European culture. Further, the research substantiated the Shakespearean narrative by providing parallel analysis of *Season of Migration to the North* where symbols, signs and characters lost their original representation and come up with different significations and meaning which challenge the prior discourse. The study proved that there are a visible similarities at some events and actions between the selected texts. It is observed that in the *Seasons of Migration to the North* events like the protagonist nationality and the setting of the novel stands for symbols such as the handkerchief and tragic ending. Some thematic patterns directly refer to the play *Othello*. From the intertextuality perspective, the study shows that there is a noticeable parallel at some places in *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*. The texts manifest similar events and similar themes, techniques elements and style of narrating the novel.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Shakespeare, Tayeb Saleh, Bazerman, Othello, season of migration to the north

1. Introduction

Texts serve as advocates of social change in one way or the other which enables writers to explore different perspectives from different writers. Arabic texts are important written discourses and they share literary features with western literature. These features provide a motivation to study their literary structure with regard to their social and cultural perspective. Arabic literature with reference to contemporary debates on literary texts is not fully investigated. Arabic writers have employed the elements of western texts in their own texts by using different perspectives out of which one is intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a newly established theory in textual analysis. It is a realm which helps in identifying the sources an author depends on and how these sources assist to comprehend how authors try to characterize, depend on and advance prior work in their related fields of study. To state it differently, intertextuality presents a perspective of writing texts as a way of looking at textual interactions with prior texts and written conventions.

The origin of intertextuality, according to Barzegar (2014) ^[5], is largely taken from the Russian formalist, Mikhail Bakhtin whose works were not popular at that time amongst literary scholars due to social and political unrest. He figures out a new concept that replaces the concept of Saussurian theory of language by emphasizing the overlooked fact of his language theory called the social aspect. Bakhtin stresses that the social status of the language speakers plays an important part in constructing the parole of the given language system: language that occurs in the social state between actual people.

In this paper, the main purpose for conducting the intertextual analysis is to investigate how Tayeb Salih in his novel *Season of Migration to the North* draws on William Shakespeare's play *Othello* for writing his novel. That is, the analysis aims to explore how Tayeb Salih incorporates Othello in his text, what type of sources he uses, how Salih uses these sources and how he positions himself in relation to Othello to make his own novel.

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2. Literature review

The translation and adaptation of Shakespearean works and Tayeb Saleh's work from English into Arabic goes through a long procedure of investigations by a lot of scholars (Badawi, 1995; Al-Mani 'I, 1997; Al-Naqqāsh, 2005; Elaskary 2008; Alkurdi 2016) [4, 2, 3, 7, 1].

However, in spite of such a considerable body of research on Shakespearean works, the study of intertextuality has not been carried out. The figures of *Othello* are prevalent in some Arabic literary works where they have been appropriated and utilized for numerous purposes. They have been presented in the form of allusion to the Shakespearean play, an argument of it or an association to it. One of the famous intertextual writers is the Egyptian Salwa Bakr. In her story named "*The Sorrows of Desdemona*" that has been introduced in the collective translated series of "The Wiles of Men and Other Stories" (1992), the major theme of this story is about a small girl who acts as the character of Desdemona in the performance that has been shown in a high school for the play of *Othello*. The play directed by teacher Mrs. Inayat, who is very respected by Muna, the student heroine. The beginning of the story is when as Mrs. Inayat comes up to the heroine and catches her head in the palms of her hands, making her bend forward, and tells her that English language looked as though it has been running in her blood for generations, "No, not like that, Muna. Desdemona couldn't be like that in this case. Be more afraid more obedient hopeless, with your head like this bend forward" (Bakr, 1992).

The other intertextual study of the Shakespearean play *Othello* is by Emile Habiby (Habiby, 1974), the Palestinian writer who titles the story *Al-Waqai' Al-Qharibah fy Hayat Saeed Abu Al-Nahs Al-mutasha'il* which means "The Secret Life of Saeed, The Ill-fated Pessimist, 1982". It was published for the first time in Haifa city in 1974. The theorist Edward Said described the novel as "a carnivalesque burst of mockery and theatrical comedy". He stepped further to call it "an Arab Tristram Shandy". The novel describes a Palestinian picaro left in Israel and who ultimately moves from a character of being suppressive into an aggressive one.

Some literary works might be quoted in Ghazol which had been cited in Shakespearean texts to produce parallelism with the situations of the collective Self in the Arab countries.

The Egyptian writer Ra'fat Al-Duwairi wrote a play, *Shakespeare malikan* (Shakespeare Rex) that was acted in Cairo Theater in the popular district of Ataba in 1976 under various commercial titles such as *Shakespeare in Ataba*. Although *Othello*'s character is revealed in *Shakespeare malikan*, the play does not itself dwell on *Othello*'s character. The play basically has articulated the wavering of the artist between authentic art and commercialized art in line with Hamlet's question "To be, or not to be: that is the interrogation" i.e., to be or not to be an Artist (cited in Ghazoul, 1998) [10].

3. Aims and Objectives

A detailed contrastive analysis will help us to explore how the writers place themselves in relation to the topic, how they manipulate the topic and address their audience, and also how they draw on other sources to construct their own texts. Through the intertextual study of the selected works, the research seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

- 1) To find out the similarities between Shakespeare's *Othello* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*.

- 2) To identify the role intertextuality plays in the novel *Season of Migration to the North*.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1 Intertextuality

The idea of intertextuality has been introduced by the Bulgarian-French philosopher, Julia Kristeva in the 1960s which comes under post-structuralist theory and primarily shares parallels with Bakhtin's (1981) notions of heteroglossia and dialogism. Kristeva (1980) [14] points out that any text-written or spoken-is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in a space of a given text" (p.36), in that "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another" (Kristeva, 1980, p.36) [14] that are "lacking in any kind of independent meaning". Kristeva stresses that the intertextual process explains that the text needs to be considered as a grouping of texts within history and society (cited in Vahdani, & Saeed 2015) [18]. However, its origin may be traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure's study of signs which he named semiology. Saussure's semiology brought about a revolution in this field and is one of the originators of the theory of intertextuality (Rahman, 2016).

4.2 Various models of intertextuality

There are various models of intertextuality out of which Genette's model of Transtextuality (Genette, 1997) [9], Norman Fairclough's (2003) model, Halliday's Model (2002, 2003) [13], Model of Widdowson (2004) [19], Miola's (2004) [15] model of intertextuality and Bazerman's (2004) [6] model of intertextuality. Due to space and time limit, we briefly present the adopted and newly established model of intertextuality by Bazerman (2004) [6].

For Bazerman (2004) [6], the concept of Intertextuality consists of the explicit and implicit associations which a literary text or word has to previous, current and latent future writings. According to such associations, a text arouses a manifestation of the discourse situation, the textual properties which have associations on the condition as to how the existing text spots itself and traces on other writings. He situates some initial notions and a process to analyze intertextuality. This comprises of levels of intertextuality and techniques of intertextual representation. To analyze intertextuality, Bazerman differentiates various levels on which a text explicitly raises another text and depends on another text.

Bazerman recognizes six levels of intertextuality which arise in a literary work. These are:

Prior text as a source of meaning to be used at face value, explicit social dramas of prior texts engaged in discussion, background, support, and contrast, beliefs, issues, ideas, statements generally circulated, recognizable kinds of language, phrasing and genre and resources of language (Bazerman, 2004, p.85- 87) [6].

4.3 Levels of intertextuality

For the purpose of analyzing the intertextual, we should differentiate the diverse levels that a text explicitly raises through another writing and depends on the other text as a conscious resource. The following figure explains the mechanism of intertextuality theory for scrutinizing the way the author traces on another source for the compiling of their own texts, how the authors content refer to other origins in their writing, what kinds of bases the authors apply, how the

authors purpose to apply these sources and how the authors locate themselves as authors in association to other sources to construct their own declarations. The diagram of intertextuality by Bazerman's (2004) [6] and Wang's (2006) is as follows:

Figure.1. An Analytical framework of intertextuality [Adapted from Wang (2006) Bazerman (2004) [6]].

I. Representation Intertextual (How writers include outside sources in a text)

- Direct quotation
 - Indirect quotation
 - Description
 - Paraphrasing
- Inserted
 ↑
 ↓
 Assimilated

II. Source type (What types of sources writers use)

- Attributed.
 - Personal or impersonal.
 - Identified or unidentified.
 - Specific or generic.
 - Singular or plural.
 - Status neutral or high/low status.
- Unattributed.
 - Mentioning of a person, document or statements.
 - Comment or evaluation on a statement, text or otherwise invoked voice.
 - Implicitly recognizable language and forms.

III. Source function (What writers use outside sources for)

- Background information
- Evidence
- Beliefs, ideas, issue circulated
- Others

IV. Endorsement (How the writers position themselves as writers in relation to outside sources)

- Non-endorsement (neutral) (responsibility delegated).
- Endorsement (positive) (responsibility reclaimed/shared).
- Dis-endorsement (negative) (responsibility delegated).

5. Methodology

The current study is textual analysis of two literary texts *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North* with the aim to scrutinize intertextual relation between the selected literary texts *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*. The main focus of attention of this study is a comparative analysis of *Othello* by Shakespeare and *Season of Migration to the North* novel by Tayeb Salih in light of intertextuality. The descriptive method will be adopted in this research. The researcher applies the model of intertextuality adapted by Bazerman (2004) [6] to examine the differences and similarities between *Othello* written by Shakespeare and *Season of Migration to the North* composed by Tayeb Salih.

6. Discussion and Analysis

In order to establish the core of intertextuality we will restrict our discussion to two types of explicit and implicit that are commonly applied in *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North* due to the lack of space in this research paper techniques that can be found in *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*.

Explicit

Table 1: Mentioning a person (Othello)

Othello	Season of Migration to the North
The protagonist of the Play is Othello.	"What race are you? She asked me. 'Are you African or Asian? I'm like Othello-Arab-African, I said to her". (Salih, 1969, p. 38). "I am no Othello. I am a lie. Why don't you sentence me to be hanged and so kill the lie?" (Salih, 1969, p. 33).

In the above quotations, there are direct explicit references to the protagonist Othello of Shakespeare's play.

Mustafa in *Season of Migration to the North* compares himself to Othello of Shakespeare's play. Here it is explicitly evident from the novel that he is the hero just like Othello. In *Othello*, William Shakespeare focuses his play around Othello and he essentially tries to clarify the destructive part of Othello. For instance, Othello kills his wife Desdemona in sleep for suspicion of unfaithfulness that he finally recognizes as false. He also kills himself later. This idea is also showed in *Season of Migration to the North* where the protagonist Mustafa refers to himself as Othello when he talks to the married British lady Isabella Seymour. In this case, Isabella Seymour is paralleled to Desdemona in *Othello*. This is also evidently portrayed because these characters are used as being in a relationship in both scenarios.

On the other hand, Mustafa is portrayed as having anti-Othello features. Though they are both portrayed as having no heart, which is portrayed in the way they are responsible for killing of people: Othello kills his wife due to her "infidelity" towards him. But this is not the case when Mustafa kills Isabella because he does not killed himself afterwards, contrary to Othello who kills himself due to guilt. Mustafa also says that he is not Othello because Othello was a lie. So, within the background story of Othello, Tayeb Salih creates a different domain of the story in a different thematic context where after killing his wife, he does not feel guilt ridden because he is feeling appreciative of himself as he thinks he has successfully taken revenge from colonizers.

Table 2: Symbols (handkerchief)

Othello	Season of Migration to the North
"Your napkin is too little" (3.3. 290) "I am glad I have found this napkin" (3.3. 295) "EMILIA. O, is that all? What will you give me now For the same handkerchief?" IAGO. What handkerchief? EMILIA. What handkerchief?" (3.3.315) "I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin, And let him find it" (3.3. 330) "Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?" (3. 3.440)	"I knew she was being unfaithful to me; the whole house was impregnated with the smell of infidelity. Once I found a man's handkerchief which wasn't mine. "It's yours," she said when I asked her. "This handkerchief isn't mine," I told her. "Assuming it's not your handkerchief" she said, "what are you going to do about it?" "...You're being unfaithful to me," I said to her. "Suppose I am being unfaithful to you," she said. "I swear I'll kill you," I shouted at her." (Salih, 1969, p.162)

In the above given quotations, it seems that some major symbols, especially of handkerchief are found both in *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*. In these texts, this symbol plays a major role and signifies infidelity. In *Othello*, the most dominant symbol is the handkerchief which has been circulated through the whole drama. Othello gave it as a

gift to his beloved wife Desdemona: the handkerchief stands like a token of his love which Desdemona cherishes because we know this handkerchief was actually given to Othello by his mother for building mutual and strong love between Othello and his wife Desdemona. Iago persuades his wife Emilia to snatch it from Desdemona since Iago recognizes that the handkerchief has a lot of emotional worth and that Othello will get nervous when he will know his wife no longer has it. He also identifies that for Othello, the handkerchief represents Desdemona's loyalty. Iago then onwards works out his sinister designs to hand over this handkerchief to Cassio and he lets Othello to see it in his hand. Othello is infuriated after this incident and is sure of Desdemona's disloyalty. In this way, the symbol handkerchief looks like a white wedding sheet which has been stained with a virgin's blood. So, in Othello's mind, as long as Desdemona has the handkerchief in her hand, she's innocent. But, the moment she misses it, she misses her chastity. Such a small object refers to the sensitivity of jealous minds, and the way small incidents can be categorized as acts of love or disloyalty. On the other hand, in *Season of Migration to the North* the symbol of handkerchief is mentioned in the novel. It refers to

the infidelity of Mustafa's wife Jean Morris. He accused her of infidelity when he finds that the handkerchief she has with her is not actually the one given by him. In contrast to the loyal Desdemona, Jean has a questioning nature. She tells her husband Mustafa that it is his handkerchief and when he suspects this, she answers, "...Assuming it's not your handkerchief what are you going to do about it? (Salih, 1969, p.162)". Before long, Mustafa gets more possessions that are not his: a cigarette case, then a pen and the handkerchief is thus reduced to a small piece in the larger puzzle of the tragedy that had to happen. In both of these texts, the Handkerchief becomes the potent symbol for both loyalty and infidelity and the thematic structure of both texts are weaved and influenced by handkerchiefs. Both writers show how people in a fit of doubt and confusion act in an unbelievable manners and trivial matters are made serious at the end. In *Season of Migration to North* it is mentioned once, but serves the intertextual purpose in a different context. In *Othello*, it is mentioned more or less twenty five times which shows the utmost importance of this symbol.

Table 3: Indirect quotation (story of adventures)

Othello	Season of Migration to the North
<p>"Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances, Of moving accidents by flood and field, Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach, Of being taken by the insolent foe, And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence And portance in my traveler's history. Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,.....And of the Cannibals that each other eat, These things to hear Would Desdemona seriously incline. But still the house affairs would draw her hence, Which ever as she could with haste dispatch, She'd come again, and with a greedy ear Devour up my discourse, which I, observing, Took once a pliant hour and found good means.....And often did beguile her of her tears When I did speak of some distressful stroke, That my youth suffered. My story being done, She gave me for my pains a world of sighs. She swore, in faith, 'twas strange', 'twas passing strange, 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful. She wished she had not heard it, yet she wished She loved me for the dangers I had passed, And I loved her that she did pity them". (1.3. 135- 170)</p>	<p>"I related to her fabricated stories about deserts of golden sands and jungles where nonexistent animals called out to one another. I told her that the streets of my country teemed with elephants and lions and that during siesta time crocodiles crawled through it. Half-credulous, half-disbelieving, she listened to me, laughing and closing her eyes....Sometimes she would hear me out in silence, a Christian sympathy in her eyes. There came a moment when I felt that I had been transformed in her eyes into a naked primitive creature, a spear in one hand and arrows in the other, hunting elephants and lions in the jungle. This was fine. Curiosity had changed to gaiety, and gaiety to sympathy, and when I stir the still pool in its depths the sympathy will be transformed into a desire upon whose taut strings I shall play as I wish". (Salih, 1969, p. 38)</p>

Here is a parallel between *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*. On the one hand, when Desdemona was very eager to hear Othello's adventures; when Brabantio invited Othello to his house and asks Othello to tell him about his life and battles and about the triumph of his own life. Othello then tells him about unfortunate disasters and about his own adventures on the sea and about the catastrophes and dangerous voyages. Furthermore, he shares his experience when he was captured and sold as a slave and the way he got rid of this distress, also he tells him about caves, deserts, and cannibals who eat each other. Desdemona is there and she used to listen attentively to Othello's adventures and triumph, she was very proud of him and the tales also makes Desdemona to feel pity and admiration for Othello on the one hand and on the other, she loves him because he is very brave and courageous. Desdemona fell for the courageous and undaunting valor of Othello and that started a story which became the central focus of the play. On the other hand, Ms. Seymour asks Mustafa to tell her about his homeland. Mustafa tells her fabricated stories about his native land, a land where elephants and lions roam the

streets at liberty and crocodiles creep through it during siesta time. Mustafa tells her about the jungle with elephants, crocodiles crawling and he was a kind of a primitive naked man in her eyes that wields bayonet arrows to kill the animals in the jungle such as elephants and lions. Ms. Seymour is surprised and eagerly hears his adventures. He also tells her about his own family and how he grew up without a father, then he starts to lie again about sad descriptions of the way he had lost his parents. Ms. Seymour is taken by awe and sympathy toward his ordeals and starts crying because of his sad story. The above excerpts are closely related in terms of the common thematic structure with tales of adventures in both the texts where both protagonists give detailed descriptions of their adventures but they have different purposes. In *Othello*, Othello tells Desdemona about his own real adventures without exaggeration that Desdemona asks him to tell her, but in *Season of Migration to the North*, the protagonist Mustafa tells Isabella Seymour fabricated stories to seduce her and get her in his own trap to get his revenge from colonizers.

7. Implicit

Racism

Othello	Season of migration to the North
<p>“Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe”. (1.1.112).</p> <p>“Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse.....you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you.” (1.1.7)</p> <p>“To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!” (1.3.6)</p> <p>“If virtue no delighted beauty lack, Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.” (1.3.22) “Foh! One may smell in such a will most rank, Foul disproportion thoughts unnatural” (3.3.29)</p> <p>“My name, that was as fresh As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black As mine own face.” (3.3.54)</p> <p>“All my fond love thus do I blow to heaven. 'Tis gone. Arise, black vengeance, from thy hollow cell!” (3.3.63)</p> <p>“Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow.” (5.2.1) “O, the more angel she And you the blacker devil!” (5.2.36)</p>	<p>“The black Englishman” (Salih, 1969, p.53)</p> <p>“I asked one of them to rent me a room in his house he would as likely as not have refused, and were his daughter to tell him she was going to marry this African, he'd have felt that the world was collapsing under his feet”. (Salih, 1969, p.94)</p> <p>“Ravish me, you African demon. Burn me in the fire of your temple, you black god” (Salih, 1969, p.106) “How marvelous your black color is! (...) the color of magic and mystery and obscenities” (Salih, 1969, p.139)</p> <p>“My mother,’ she used to tell him, ‘would go mad and my father would kill me if they knew I was in love with a black man, but I don’t care.” (Salih, 1969, p.139)</p> <p>“you are Mustafa, my master and my lord....and I am Sausan, your slave girl” (Salih, 1969, p.146)</p> <p>“My sweet, you’re not the kind of man that kills”. (Salih, 1969, p. 159)</p>

The above given excerpt explicitly deals with the theme of race which is prevalent in the two stories either from the perspective of the color of the body or from the status in the society (inferior or superior). The notion of racism allows us to judge people depending on racial stereotypes attributed to them. In Shakespeare’s play, Othello is the hero who is endowed with great personality characteristics such as being a leader in the military, but he is dealt in an appropriate way because he is simply different in race; he is not a white man, he is black and his blackness lessens his honor such as Venetian people have. Othello is characterized differently with the overtones of racism and as a black moor addressed in stereotypical terms by Roderigo and Iago. For instance, Iago with reference to Othello focuses on his color, he describes him as an animal, he uses the racist words “black ram” and “whiter ewe” and this shows the Elizabethan concept that black men have an animal like hyper-sexuality that means the black men are inhuman in the eyes of Elizabethan society. Furthermore, the antagonist Iago claims that Desdemona has intercourse with a “Barbary horse” (Othello) and the result will be that Brabantio will have a relative neigh to him like a horse. Majority of the imagery in the play related to the color of the protagonist is in terms of blackness and thereby he is considered as a devil and inferior in European society. And Desdemona is considered as anti-moor; a white superior lady whose life becomes a curse with Othello.

On the other side, Tayeb Salih participates in the same discourse in his novel *Season of Migration to the North*, but discusses racism from different viewpoints. Europeans describe the protagonist as “the Black English man” because of his proficiency in English language, they give him this status is a reference to the belief that Europeans are civilized and superior in education in comparison with the people of Africa. Furthermore, Mustafa says that if he wants to rent a room at any house in a European city, they will refuse to give it to him and also if the daughter of the owner’s house comes to him and asks him for marriage, her father will refuse that since how could she agree to marry the African black one. Here it refers to *Othello*, when Iago tells Brabantio that Desdemona married Othello, it is like a disaster for Brabantio and he said that his daughter’s act is unbelievable since she accepted the black man, but Othello seduced her with black magic. Here, I mean that the European society is fused with

the concept of race and they do not allow their women to marry a black man. Moreover, British ladies describe Mustafa with different words related to the race. For instance, Isabella Seymour describes him as an African demon and also a black god, Sheila Greenwood was in admiration of the color of Mustafa and she exclaims that he has wonderful black color, his color is not natural, it is a kind of magic or there is some secret behind it. Ann Hammond worships Mustafa like a god, she becomes his slave girl and Mustafa her master much like Desdemona when she worships Othello. Here is a clear reference to *Othello* in *Season of Migration to the North*.

There are some other hints of racism, for example, we see Mustafa feeling lonely and as an outsider at the end when Jean Morris challenges him and proclaims that she will hate him until death. This shows the rift between them which has been constructed by racism at large. Both texts *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North* have the same theme that is racism related to color stereotypes and status in European society.

8. Conclusion

This paper aims at investigating the intertextuality between Othello and season of migration to the north within the framework of Bazermen’s (2004) model of intertextuality. The study finds that there are visible similarities in some events and actions between the selected texts. It is observed in *Season of Migration to the North*, elements like the protagonist’s nationality and the setting of the novel; also the symbols like handkerchief and mentioning a person, and some thematic patterns directly refer to the play *Othello*. In likewise manner, both *Season of Migration to the North* and *Othello* account similar events and actions.it is also proved that there is a noticeable parallel at some places in *Othello* and *Season of Migration to the North*. The texts manifest similar events and similar themes by their respective features, technique, elements and style of narrating the novel.

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