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A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

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Abstract: Building upon the failed projects Enlightenment projects, this paper depicts present day Muslims. It specifically shows the paradigmatic changes that interfere with Islam following Muslims' exposure to modernity. The objective is to underscore the universal applicability of metanarratives to specific cultural backgrounds as defined by the postmodern criticism. The first section explores the transgression of Islamic ethics through Muslim masculine homosexuality and the vice of casino gambling. The second part emphasizes Islam's politics of othering by displaying a skepticism towards modernity's principle of individual freedom and capitalist model because they bring about the Westernization of the faith. The last section deals with the spiritual little narratives as suggested antidotes to grand narratives.

Résumé : S'appuyant sur les projets ratés des projets du Siècle des Lumières, cet article dépeint les musulmans d'aujourd'hui. Il montre en particulier les changements paradigmatiques qui interfèrent avec la longue tradition de l'Islam suite à l'exposition des musulmans à la modernité. L'objectif est de souligner l'applicabilité universelle des métarécits dans des contextes culturels spécifiques telle que définie par la critique postmoderne. La première section explore la transgression des modèles hétéronormatifs à travers la masculinité islamique étrange et le vice des paris dans les casinos. La deuxième section met l'accent sur la politique de l'altérité de l'Islam en affichant un scepticisme à l'égard du principe de liberté individuelle de la modernité et du modèle capitaliste parce qu'ils engendrent l'eupéanisation de la foi. La dernière section traite des petits récits spirituels en tant qu'alternatives suggérées aux grands récits.

Keywords: gambling, homosexuality, Islam, modernity, postmodern.

Mots-clés : homosexualité, Islam, modernité, paris, postmoderne.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

Introduction

From the first generation of African writers to the third, African literature has continued to evolve, reinvented itself and seen new perspectives emerge both aesthetically and thematically. If Nigeria seems to play a pioneering role in the advent of African science-fiction, South Africa, for its part, would have rather opted for a leadership in the emergence of Islamic fiction with as figureheads, Imran Coovadia, Nazia Peer, Ahmed Essop, Aziz Hassim, Achmat Dangor, or Rayda Jacobs to name a few.¹ In Islamic narratives, a new literary sensibility transpires and addresses the crucial issues related to the long-standing conflict between the Islamic world and the West, Muslims encounter with the modernity, and also contradictions that arise within the Islamic per se.

Barrington Marais and Cheryl Stobie's article "Voices from the Margins : Islam, Queer Identity, and Female Agency in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*" shows how marginal subjectivities such as women and queer men are under the domination of the patriarchal assumptions of Islamic praxis. The work also shows that though they are oppressed by hetero-hegemonic Islamic machism, the peripheral characters still find voice to subvert traditional Islam. Yet, in Jack Kearney's "Representations of Islamic Belief and Practice in a South African Context: Reflections on the Fictional Work of Ahmed Essop, Aziz Hassim, Achmat Dangor and Rayda Jacobs" an inner conflict from within is not the issue. While analyzing Jacobs's work, Kearney rather reveals the dichotomy between Qur'anic doctrinal message and Muslims' actual religious practice. He shows that in the short story 'In Double Storey', polygamous life is done in compliance with Islamic teachings while in *Postcards from South Africa*, polygynous relationships are biased when former wives are abandoned to newly-bred wives by unfair and unscrupulous husbands.

This article is grounded on Rayda Jacobs's *Confessions of a Gambler*. The work is cast in the shape of a fictional confessional which shows the shortcomings of some Muslims to cope with ethical Islamic ways. This paper mediates the insights put forward by both Marais and Stobie and Kearney. While they present many taboos, I intend to emphasize only two: male homosexuality and addiction to gambling. While we both labor the subversion of faith-driven

¹ Though I recognize Sudanese female writer Leila Aboulela's major role in the breakthrough of Islamic narratives, I confer instead South Africa with the leadership of this trend by means of the prolific number of its Islamic writers.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TUO

praxis by flawed Muslims, I specifically emphasize Muslims' alienation by means of Western metanarratives. Similarly to Kearney, I propose to show the abyssal difference between religious word and the actual practice by hypocritical Muslims. The thrust of this paper is to underscore the challenges of the religious faith is faced with in the postmodern age; or else, how conforming to religious principles becomes hard in the contemporary world. The objective of this insight is twofold. First, it seeks to show the plights of the Muslim people in the postmodern age. Second, it also suggests heuristic strategies to come to terms with the ills of modernity. The questions that underlie this study are as follows: what are the metanarratives that devastate the religious faith of Muslims? How do they affect the Muslim belief? How do Muslim react to this?

The answer to these questions surely requires the use of postmodernism. It is a literary theory that emphasizes the side effects of modernity as mentioned in the above-mentioned questions. As if in illustration, Stephen R. C. Hicks writes:

Postmodern rejects the Enlightenment project. It holds that the modernist premises of the Enlightenment were untenable since the beginning and that their cultural manifestations have now reached their nadir. While the modern world continues to speak of reason, freedom, and progress, its pathologies tell another story. The postmodern critique of those pathologies is offered as the death knell of modernism.

On the basis of the postmodern criticism, the overall line of arguments will be of a three-stage analysis. The first section will explore the transgression of the moral touchstone of Islam in postmodern societies. In a second instance, Islam's politics of othering by displaying a skepticism towards the Western metanarratives of Enlightenment will be emphasized. The last leg of this insight will deal with the spiritual little narratives as suggested antidotes to grand narratives.

1. Metanarratives and the Subversion of the Islamic Moral Touchstone

1.1. Reza: A Queer Male Muslim in the Muslim Community of Cape Town

The South African Muslim community as fictionalized in Rayda Jacobs's *Confessions of a Gambler* is torn between loyalty to Islamic ethics and adherence to the standards of modernity. Unfortunately, the feeling of being attracted by the grand narratives is so pressing that Muslims from South Africa finally engage in frowned-upon behaviors that Western political and economic liberalism is lenient to. In the narratives of Jacobs's novel, it bears

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TUO

stressing that two suppressed social groupings within Islam loom large. On the one hand, the book chronicles the queer Islamic model. This is the like of male Muslim individuals with sexual and/or emotional attraction towards members of the same sex or gender. In so doing, gay men in South Africa Muslim community not only subvert the Islamic heteronormativity but they also transgress the long-standing tradition of their religion. In the novel, Reza is a queer-identifying male Muslim individual. It is true Abeeda has raised her offspring according to Islamic values and faith: *I've raised all my sons with the word of God* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 7). Yet, her last son of hers has turned gay. She tells her sister with a mood full of depression: *He's gay, Zulpha. I've never said it loud. My son's gay* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 54). However, the Holy Qur'an condemns this practice through Prophet Lot's warning against his people: *Verily, you practise your lusts on men instead of women. Nay, you are a people transgressing beyond bounds* (Chapter 7, verses 80-81).

This situation reveals a contrast: Muslim characters brought up to the values of Islam and who surprisingly turn their backs on religious ethics and become gay. The sexual orientation of Reza finds its explanation in the postmodern hermeneutics. Specifically to this study, postmodern criticism states that Muslim characters develop homosexual behaviors in emulation of the Enlightenment agenda of democratic and liberal institutions. Reza becomes a queer individual following his ambition to replicate individual freedom and human rights guaranteed by the metanarratives of modernity. Though he belongs to the Muslim community, he still displays a liking for Western system of beliefs that irremediably subvert the Islamic faith. Stephen R. C. Hicks (2004, p. 23) writes in illustration: *The Enlightenment developed those features of the modern world that many now take for granted-liberal politics*. For this gay Muslim character, all humans were born free and have the privilege of liberal politics. In the name of this liberalism, they have the capacity of thinking and making the best decisions for themselves without any external constraint. As an aficionado of the agenda of modernity, Reza readily chooses to become gay; because this is a right that is upheld by the Enlightenment liberal politics. Thus, being a Muslim does not describe the condition of a believer who strictly follows the established Islamic heteronormative models. To Reza's mind, to be Muslim is to attest to one's belonging to Islam while keeping one's freedom of choice and thought. This freedom, which guarantees the possibility of choosing one's sexual orientation, gives Reza the full right to practise his lusts on men instead of women without being accountable to anyone.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

1.2. Abeeda: A Scarfed Muslim Woman's Addiction to Gambling

Jacobs's novel also explores female Muslim addiction to gambling as an activity that transgresses Islamic ethics. Because they are attracted by lifestyles and games imported from the West, some Muslims turn away from the ethical conducts recommended by the Qur'anic message. Following their desire to follow in the footsteps of the modernity-driven life of Western people, some South African Muslims are lured into the seduction of metanarratives. They thus develop the vice of gambling as the sign of their entrapment into the abyssal nebula of the Enlightenment agenda of modernity. *Confessions of a Gambler* documents the hypocritical attitude of female characters. They claim their belonging to Islam through efforts to stick to some religious recommendations. Yet, they readily subvert Islamic teachings by yielding to gambling, a frowned-upon behavior. The book unveils a scarfed Muslim who plays gambling. Though she recognizes *I'm a Muslim woman [...] I wear two scarves. And under scarf, and a medorah* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 7), she still falls prey to gambling machines: *I came up with a name for the casino* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 35). Yet, Allah's condemnation of gambling is clearly established in the Qur'an: *O you who believe! Wine, gambling, altars and divining arrows are filth, made up by Satan* (Chapter 5, verse 90), God warns. Playing gambling in casinos by Abeeda can be accounted for by the interconnectedness of world economies. For postmodern critics, the world's economy is dominated by capitalist models of the Enlightenment. Thus, all specific economic fabrics of the Third World emulate large-scale capitalist epistemologies of modern era. By causal effect, the capitalism of Western casino is soon adopted by the Cape Town Muslim woman in the narratives of *Confessions of a Gambler*. Soraya W. Assad (2006, p. 3) illustratively pens: *Emulation of the West helps to feed the consumer oriented society* of African countries.

A postmodern scrutiny of Assad's insight reveals that Cape Town is a society where materialistic attachment to possessions, like in Western countries, is the dominant economic posture of Abeeda. Resultantly, she becomes the archetype of flawed Muslims who have succumbed to the pitfalls of gambling, turning their backs on Islamic ethics. In engaging in speculative ventures of casino capitalism, she vows allegiance to the Enlightenment projects that urge subversion of her religious faith. Thus, by searching for money from slot machines, she does not fit into the standard image of fervent Muslim women. She is only viewed as modern Muslim who is strongly influenced by principles and behaviors of the age of reason.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TJO

For postmodern critics, the present world which is governed by modernity is a society in which even religious people are prone to sinful ways. That is exactly the issue Dave Robinson (1999, p. 43) foregrounds through the following contention: *Our postmodern world seems very likely to become one of spiritual emptiness and cultural superficiality, in which social practices are repeated and parodied*. This shows that Reza and his mother Abeeda are Muslims with spiritual shallowness. Their spiritual background is so superficial and unsubstantial that they are amenable to act in ways that run counter to established Islamic ways: *becoming modern is assumed to be related to the acquisition and consumption of certain status goods and preference for western lifestyle* Assad (2006, p. 3) once observes.

Building on the postmodern thought, this study proves that there are reason for believing that the grand narratives of the Enlightenment are generally accepted principles and epistemologies that reach out to people across all continents. Issued forth from the West, such large-scale discourses quickly spread to other cultural settings, causing paradigmatic transformations. Yet, the collapse of Islamic faith to modernity as chronicled in *Confessions of a Gambler* is what disturbs much. If even the long-standing Qur'anic message gives in to the Western political liberal and consumerism, the world seems to be under the dominance of the West for many upcoming centuries. As a critic of modernity in the Arab world, Christophe de Ballaigue posits that since World War I, Western liberalism has permeated intelligentsias of the Middle East. He says that a transformational agenda was set into motion with *the freeing of knowledge, individual fulfilment and secular rights* (de Ballaigue, 2017, p. 353) in Middle East countries. Hopefully, Jacobs's novel suggests that there is a ray of hope. The work of fiction holds that in spite of the overwhelming influence of modernity's master discourses on some Muslims across the world, there are still some Islamic voices to make a stand against the modernization of the Islam.

2. Islam: Disbelief in the Islamic Project of Enlightenment and Modernity

2.1. Disbelief Based on the Distressful Nature of Metanarratives

This study holds forth about the skepticism of Islamic texts and the whole community of Muslims towards untraditional Islam. The reason is that they bring about pain and distress to Muslims. Put it another way, the Islamic thought raises doubt about the metanarratives of modernity as they portend no good for Muslims. They only make life difficult for them. First,

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TUO

in the corpus, this skepticism is corroborated by Reza's personal skepticism that lays emphasis the pitfalls of queerness. The following confessional how his life gets ruined: *I have Aids, Mummy* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 30). In light of the postmodern approach, it stands out that the modernization of Islamic faith is not healthy for Muslims themselves. The proof is that Reza's homosexuality issues in HIV infection. Thus, one may assert that the Western political liberalism, together with the confidence in individuals and citizenship rights adopted by the Muslim youth are not profitable for him. Instead of preparing Reza to become a democratic citizen, a fully autonomous individual who can run his own life efficiently, the individual freedom unfortunately drives the boy into chaos. It does not bring about the promised well-being and emancipation: *[P]ostmodernism is a phenomenon that applies mainly to Western societies that have passed through the phase of modernity and are now becoming disillusioned with it and are questioning its intellectual underpinnings and emancipatory promises* (E. Bazzi, 2013, p. 1). By casual effect, Jacobs seems to hold the humanist project of the Enlightenment in disbelief. The author believes that the metanarratives are failed agendas because they do not improve human lives. Modernity rather brings human lives into distress and ailments instead of improving them. The following insight by Jean-François Lyotard is a case in point. Elaborating on the prickly feature of grand narratives, the French postmodern theorist (J.F. Lyotard, 1992, p. 77) posits that modernity *does not answer to demands issuing from human needs. On the contrary, human entities whether social or individual-always seem destabilized by the results and implications of development*. Here, the novel reveals how Reza has destroyed his own life through a blind allegiance to the Enlightenment project of Western political liberalism culminating in his HIV infection.

Alongside the postmodern criticism, Islam is also critical of the Enlightenment. As a proof, the Islamic discourse holds homosexuality in disbelief. Basing on holy scripts, the majority of Cape Town Muslims call into question some male individuals proclivity for same-gender sexual relations. In the corpus, as Abeeda asks for her children's lenience concerning Reza's queer identity, they still hold something against homosexuality. They ground their opinion on the Qur'an: *But they didn't agree with me. For all their modern ideas, they still went by the Book* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 47). Interesting enough, one cannot fail to notice that though they have taken Western metanarratives as their own way of life, and live accordingly, Abeeda's other children find ways to raise doubt on gayness within Islam.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

Second, Islam's skepticism towards Western grand narratives are manifest in the setbacks and plights Muslim gamblers are prone to. Of note is that the adoption of the Western grand economic schemes is less profitable for Muslims because it brings one life's into sorrow. The following lines better confirm the Qur'anic lack of confidence in Muslims' indulging in casino capitalism, a branch of consumer society. A best way to grasp the essence of the Holy Book's doubt about gambling is to lead an inquiry into its subsequent dire financial crisis the gambler is lured into. The study reveals that people who keep playing gambling with slot machines in casinos hardly achieve financial stability. Gambling becomes like a mirage for them. By playing on a regular basis, they always believe in winning the jackpot the day luck is around. However, they find themselves in an infernal nebula, a vicious circle. For, the more they bet, the poorer they become. Some of them even end up leaving in slot machines, all their pocket money and the money for households shopping. In illustration, Jacobs's novel rules in Abeeda's financial setbacks after compulsive gambling activities: .

Within twenty minutes, I had no money left. I walked quickly out to the parking lot for the hundred rand I'd left in the car. I tried a different machine. It took the whole hundred [...] I found myself at the ATM machine withdrawing three hundred rand. At five-thirty I had lost it all, including the petrol money [...] On and on I blamed myself [...] There I sat with my bag on my lap in the small cubicle looking into the empty wallet, asking myself over and over how I could've done such a thing. I'd lost one thousand four hundred rand (Jacobs, 2004, p. 71).

In light of the above, it comes into clear view that the postmodern criticism holds that games of chance is a Western economic metanarrative that is misleading. Abeeda's continual gambling activities have entrapped her into illusory expectations; what Otto Paans (202, p. 279) calls *postmodern Tantalus*. The postmodern Tantalus is likened to deceitful money to be gained in casinos. Since one is not sure to get it, it shows that the casino economic industry is not reliable. In such a postmodern economy, gamblers always fancy over reaching the biggest win. And by dint of playing over and over again, trying to seize this mirage-like jackpot, they end up totally broke, some even get heavily indebted. The case of Abeeda is enough telling: *I owed my sister and Garaatie money. I owed Margaret money. I was in the arrears on my credit card. I had overdue accounts. And I didn't have a cent in the bank* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 190), the female narrator evidences.

In the postmodern sense, losing large sums of money to gambling confirms the Qur'an disbelief in the appropriation of the metanarratives of the Enlightenment by Muslims across the

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TJO

world. For postmodern thinkers, when modernity gained entrée to the historic evolution of the world after the obsolescence of feudalism, it puts forward some large-scale epistemologies. They take the shape of capitalist economic systems designed to promote private ownership with an emphasis on engaging in business ventures for the improvement of one's economic and financial condition: a best way to assure the emancipation of individuals. However, taking into account the side effects of metanarratives of modernity, people readily realize that the projects of the Enlightenment are doubtful. In this logic, J-F. Lyotard states the postmodern world is a society in which the grand narratives of the Enlightenment purports to address human needs with reliable solutions. Unfortunately, people grow to realize that they live in an era where their existential problems are left unanswered and unsolved: *the grand narrative has lost its credibility* (J.F. Lyotard, 1984, p. 37) he once writes. Effectively in *Confessions of a Gambler*, Abeeda's adoption of Cape Town casino capitalism does not help her attain a sustainable economic and financial condition. Yet, rather than making her a rich and prosperous female Muslim, the use of slot machines have conversely contributed to plunge her in a untenable process of fragmentation. One may say that Abeeda now may understand that casino capitalism is not designed to make people happy; but to make them more distressed.

It also comes into clear view that the Islamic criticism of modernity follows in the footsteps of the postmodern skepticism towards metanarratives. For the Qur'anic text, Muslims who appropriate the totalizing theories of modern economy should be prone to open suspicion. This premise take its impetus from the contention that embracing the Enlightenment agendas bears some deleterious impacts on the Muslim world. The Holy Book has an incisive stand point regarding games of chance. Jacobs's 2004 novel renders a parodied version: *Concerning wine and gambling. In them is great sin. And some profit for men, but the sin is greater than the profit* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 36), this parodied Qur'anic verse is enough explicit.

2.2. Disbelief Based on the Metanarratives' Privation of Eternal Life.

Islam disbelieves in Muslim homosexuality and gambling because they are immoral and abominable practices which do not guarantee eternal life in paradise when a Muslim dies. The Islamic religion raises objections to the Enlightenment because it predicates that modernity drive believers from the path of spiritual sanctity and leads them to sinful ways at death. What comes out of this doxa is that some religions seem to be cautious about the discourse of

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TJO

modernity in that some of its grand narratives may lead spiritual loss. In Jacobs's novel, Braima realizes his HIV-infected son Reza has few chances to get to paradise upon his death. That is the reason why he negatively reacts to the boy HIV status: "This is disgusting" (Jacobs, 2004, p. 33). Gayness is disgusting because Allah Himself condemns it: *The Qur'an is very explicit in its condemnation of homosexuality* (N. Kligerman, 2007, p. 53). Homosexuality is disgusting because God abhors it; and gay Muslim individuals who die without repenting are sure to be thrown in the hell or *jahanam* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 51). It is by virtue of the soul loss and the after-death disgrace of homosexuals that E. Bazzi (2013, p.9) posits that postmodernity poses distinct problems for religious worldviews, including Islam. This means that rather than favoring a successful religious life for people, modernity dwindles their chances for eternal life at death.

Islam's questioning of metanarratives is also true of gambling. Alike queer masculine individuals, gamblers' hereafter-life is assumed to portend no good: Abeeda's friend Garaatie reminds her : *It's haraam* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 68) and the *dirty money* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 50) from casino slot machines and wheel-of-fortune machines should not be used to purchase a car. Yet, in case of an accident culminating in her death, she will go to inferno: *Just now you have a bladdy accident then you are going straight to the hell fire* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 51). From the foregone, it stands out that Islam is right to call into question the discourse of modernity. The immoral conducts it brings about are not beneficial to Muslims. In his criticism of modern economy, E. Bazzi (2013, p. 10) posits that globalization and consumerism engender lifestyles, hobbies and games which involve huge consumption that *threaten the uniformity, and wholeness [...] in a religious worldview*. This just hints that the Muslim world is right to express incredulity towards the Enlightenment because its premises and agendas menace the wholeness of Islam; and they also work for the loss of the soul of those who adhere to their illusionary large-scale philosophies.

Now that Islam shows incredulity towards Western grand narratives and the Islamic appropriation of modernity, living as a gay or recognized gambler within the Cape Town Muslim community becomes a painful and trying experience. These marginal voices are readily excluded on the basis of their flawed behaviors. This way of being hard on these religious misfits not only aims to *protect Muslim communities against Western domination* (B. Marais and C. Stobie, 2018, p. 255), but also to upkeep the true essence of Islam. Yet, a better way to attain this objective is to propose heuristic strategies to come to terms with modernity.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

3. Islamic Little Narratives vs. the Enlightenment

3.1. Invoking Allah: A Spiritual Solution to Homosexuality

The first spiritual local narrative suggested by Jacobs is God's invocations against queer identity. It encompasses acts or forms of calling for the assistance or presence of the Supreme Being for the liberation from the demons of gayness. The novel reveals Reza's acts of beseeching to Allah for his soul cleansing: *That was when I started to talk to God. I pleaded with God. I prayed [...] Everyday I would wake up and think this is the day it's all going to be different* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 31). In the Lyotardian fashion, Allah's invocations is likened to little narratives that are meant for the repudiation of homosexuality from the Islamic world. Knowing that gayness has destroyed Reza's life with his HIV infection culminating in his death (Jacobs, 2004, p. 141), supplicating Allah seems to be the best religious small narrative to embank the global threats of Western-led transgressive sexual inclinations. Angélique du Toit (2011, p. 88) confirms this as she observes: *The little narrative is [...] free from the weight of tradition and the restrictions of preconceived ideologies*. Engaged in the denial of the failed absolutist ideology of the age of reason, the call for Allah's assistance stands out as a powerful spiritual strategy to cleanse and ease off the sullied homosexual souls. If *Confessions of a Gambler* appoints God's invocations as a powerful little narrative against gayness, it also marks out others ways for other flawed attitudes.

3.2. The Ramadan and the Jihad: Two Spiritual Ways to Gambling

In the subversion process of Western metanarratives, Jacobs's novel suggests two main solutions to gambling. The first Islamic little narrative is the holy month of Ramadan. Jacobs's text informs that observing the fasting offers ways to stop addiction to games of chance. For the novelist, abstaining oneself from food is a sure spiritual antidote to casino attendances. Eager to get away from slot machines, Abeeda decides to try out the fasting experience: *Can I see how I feel after Ramadan? If I can stay away from the casino for a month, maybe I can stay away forever* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 91). For Abeeda, Ramadan is an experimental act that can help her gauge her resistance to whimsical urges of gambling. She notes that if she can stay away from casinos during this holy month, this irremediably means that she can do away with gambling.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

Also noted is that evening prayers performed at the mosque during the month of Ramadan are assumed to be spiritual little narratives that help rid the sinful soul of gamblers from the pitfalls of games of chance. With the arrival of the holy month, Abeeda devotes herself to evening meditation by going to the mosque: *It was the night before Ramadan, the first night of tarawih prayers. [...] I drew strength from my surroundings and emerged from the mosque feeling hopeful and renewed* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 92), the female Muslim gambler observes. Taken together, Ramadan fasting and tarawih prayers contend that the universalist principles of the Enlightenment should not be applied to all non-West continent and countries. Muslim communities of Cape Town do not intend to adopt gambling as a way to make money. They even repudiate it. This is the reason Tony Purvis (2011, p. 134) seems right to pen that the *little narrative serves as [...] a challenge to the knowledge produced in the totalizing account of the grand narrative*. In clear, the capitalist mode of Enlightenment that nurtures casino capitalism should not be the referential economic system for Third World countries. The reason is that Western capitalism drives the life of gamblers into fragmentation: *My life was a mess [...]. Gambling had weakened my connection with God. It had eroded my soul* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 171). As a matter of fact, Jacobs predicates that the Cape Town Muslim community has no interest in embracing the failed Western totalizing knowledge. The author rather advises them to undermine it through fasting and night prayers during Ramadan. For the South African novelist, this is what paves the way for a decent life. For, while Abeeda sinks into chaos to gambling, it is through a good connection to Allah that she is nursed back to spiritual sanity.

Aside the holy month, *Confessions of a Gambler* proposes another spiritual means against gambling: the jihad. In this context, the jihad should not be understood in its pejorative meaning. It is not to be likened to a holy war undertaken by Muslims to convert by force non-Muslim people. The jihad, here, is viewed as a personal spiritual struggle for self-improvement, to combat one's own misleading demons. In the corpus, the lectures delivered by Abdul, the imam, at the madressah are enough illustrative: *I want to talk about jihad. The jihad with the self. The struggle against the open enemy, satan. Satan who wants us to follow our desires, instead of the path of God* (Jacobs, 2004, p. 160). As it comes out, the jihad is a spiritual little narrative that subverts the hegemonic stand of the large-scale economic philosophies of modernity. It shows that the casino capitalism is not healthy for members of South African

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TJO

Islamic community of Cape Town. Gambling is not a suitable activity for Muslims. One of the best ways for Muslims to resist the evil of gambling is through the little narrative known as the jihad. Also, little narratives show that apart from grand narratives, there exists another alternative. Purvis (2011, p. 135) evidences: *Little narratives, [...], make way for the possibility of a new ethics*. Building upon the postmodern thought, it means that Muslims located in Cape Town have other possibilities for a new orientation of their lives after the failure of modernity's humanist projects. Fighting against and controlling the soul's passions are sure Islamic little narratives that help come to terms with the abyss of gambling.

In the logic of Islamic little narratives subverting the Western grand narratives, it would be interesting to elaborate on the true reasons that underlie Islam's repudiation of the Enlightenment. Through the plot of *Confessions of a Gambler*, one is cognizant of a clash of two antipodal civilizations. The author clearly shows that the Islamic worldview and the Western system of thought are fundamentally opposed. The Islamic world often suspects the World for trying to assimilate Muslims into the Western cultural canons as a means of controlling their religion. This is clearly shown in the novel when Muslims transgress their moral principles and become flawed Muslims (Jacobs, 2004, p. 54 and 35). So, to protect their civilization from modernity's imperium, the Middle East and Islamic communities in all countries of the world are engaged in a process for a return to an essentialist culture of genuine Islam. E. Bazzi (2013, p. 3) rightfully pens that *Islam has proven to be the most resistant to [the Enlightenment] secularism* because "[t]he West is frightening (Mernissi, 2002, p. 16). Interesting enough, some political concepts grounded on the Islamic culture can also account for Islam's resistance against the invasion of the large scale narratives.

Fatema Mernissi (2002, p. 13) puts forward the idea of *Gharb*. In her contention, *Gharb* is an Arabic term for the West. For her, *Gharb* indicates an unfamiliar place or territory. Since Arab people do not know and do not understand the ins and outs of the West-*Gharb*, they hold it in contempt and suspicion. On this account, the foreign (the West, *gharib*) stand out as the Other the Islamic world should keep aloof from. In Jacobs' work, the metanarratives of modernity are likened to the weird land, the stranger, the *Gharb* or *gharib* that the long-standing tradition of Islam should be careful of.

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*
Dr Souleymane TUO

Another concept that accounts for the fight of Islam against modernity is what E. Bazzi (2013, p. 3) calls *High Islam*. For the postmodern critic, when the Muslim acquaints with modernity, it is owing to High Islam that Muslims did not yield to the Enlightenment metanarratives. The reason is that to confront the Gharb or gharib, the Middle East did not have to recourse to a Western paradigm for their resistance. On the contrary, Arabs resorted to paradigms and tools from their own cultural and civilizational background. This is what explains that even though the Middle East enters into the era of modernity, Arab people still succeed in upkeep their values. Applied to Jacobs's novel, spiritual little narratives such as invocations, Ramadan fasting and tarawih prayers together with the jihad are very close to High Islam which *reflects the natural taste* (E. Bazzi, 2013, p. 3) of true Islam.

Conclusion

One may readily assert that this study mainly consisted in exploring the transgression of Islamic faith through masculinity gayness and addiction to gambling. This comes into being following Muslims' exposure to the metanarratives of modernity. Seeing that modernity's principle of individual freedom and capitalist mode of Enlightenment bring more pain than good to people in the postmodern age, the Qur'anic texts and the whole of the Muslim community cast aspersions upon the large-scale philosophies of modernity. Thus, spiritual little narratives are suggested as appropriate antidotes to grand narratives. They consist of God's invocations, Ramadan fasting and night prayers, and finally the jihad as fights against the passions of one's soul.

This study also underscores the dual criticism of postmodernism and Islam against modernity's metanarratives. In fact, the postmodern thought questions metanarratives in the same proportion as the same way Muslims *remained skeptical of the intellectual underpinnings of modernity* (2013, p. 1) according to E. Bazzi. Thus, both postmodern and Islamic criticisms join voices to push the Enlightenment projects to the shores of nothingness. They seem to engage in a "Counter-Enlightenment" (Hicks, 2004, p. 24) rally for the thorough denial of the Enlightenment which proves vulnerable and counter-productive. If this common agenda comes to fruition, maybe Islam and the Muslim world will be legitimized once for all in the eyes of the West. Maybe the ongoing Western opinion will hold Islam in high esteem. Maybe

A Postmodern Reading of Islamic Fiction: Muslim Faith and the Challenges of Modernity in Rayda Jacobs' *Confessions of a Gambler*

Dr Souleymane TUO

Islamophobic statements together with Orientalist standpoints geared at the Middle East and the Islamic world as a whole may come to an end someday.

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